



U.S.S. ALBANY, Cruiser 3rd class. Length over all--354 ft. 9-1/2 in.  
Extreme beam--43 ft. 9 in. Displacement--3430 tons. Speed--20.5 knots  
Complement: 16 Officers. 329 Men. Recommissioned June 10, 1907.

On October 20, 1911, the Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Asiatic Fleet, received cable orders from Washington to dispatch the U.S.S. ALBANY to China and to intercept the U.S.S. NEW ORLEANS by cable and keep her at the scene of trouble where she would be most needed until relieved by the U.S.S. CINCINNATI, due to leave the United States in November. On October 21st, in obedience to written orders from the Commander-in-Chief, we got underway at 1:23 a.m., bound for Shanghai, China, arriving there at 10:00 a.m., the 24th. We had excellent weather enroute, the only serious mishap coming the first day out when we hit a heavy ground swell head on, which smashed the search light control, tore loose a large ventilator, and shattered the glass front of the wheel house, showering glass in that vicinity and severely cutting those about.

The occupation of Shanghai by the rebels was most extraordinary from our point of view. On the afternoon of November 3rd, formal notice was given that the old Manchu city would be burned that night and according to programme the supposed burning was carried off in the most approved style though we learned the next day that only the Tao-tai's yamen was destroyed. This seemingly unnecessary destruction of property was evidently considered by the rebel sympathizers as a great victory. After the above demonstration Shanghai was, without a doubt, revolutionary. All sorts of versions of the new flag decorated the chinese stores about the city; rebel soldiers could be seen everywhere, and the two Imperial gunboats in the stream hoisted rebel flags. Of course the capture of Shanghai was a great disappointment to the men on board who were all primed up to see warfare as it is popularly supposed to be conducted.

November 5th, we took sixty marines twelve miles down the river to Woosung to land and guard the two cable stations there. We were surprised to find the strong forts of Woosung flying the rebel banner;


they having gone over about the time we having arrived, no blood being shed.

The night of November 7th we weighed anchor and made sixteen knots for Amoy, arriving there November 9th a.m. We found everything quiet at Amoy, the city still being Imperial, but all the high chinese officials gone and the government temporarily under the management of foreign residents. A representative of the Standard Oil Co., came on board and said the Emperor had invited the Viceroy of Amoy to loan him one million taels, which invitation the Viceroy did not receive favorably, and on consideration of the pros and cons, lost his nerve and departed for ports unknown. As there seemed no urgent need for our presence in Amoy, we got underway again for Woosung, after being anchored just three hours.

Taking coal and stores aboard at Woosung, we sailed for Nanking, our present station, November 15th. Nanking is a strongly fortified city two hundred and forty miles up the Yang-tse Kiang. At Chinkiang, forty miles below Nanking, we passed Admiral Sah's old fleet now under the rebel flag. The flagship saluted us with twenty-one guns, probably giving the ALBANY the distinction of being the first American man-o'-war so honored by the new government. We did not return their courtesy as their regime was not recognized. The old Tartar city of Nanking is surrounded by a wall seventy feet high and thirty feet wide at the base. The Imperial forces in the city were under the command of General Chang Shun. The principal fortifications are located on three large hills, namely: Lion, Purple and Tiger. Lion in the city, Purple about three miles inland and Tiger, the largest, three miles down the river, thus forming a triangle.

The night of November 25th Tiger Hill was very mysteriously captured by the rebels, and from our previous experiences in Shanghai and Woosung, we decided that it would be but a matter of a few days before all the forts would go over to the rebels after a series of bloodless and uninteresting encounters.

Sunday morning, November 26th, however, some real, live, genuine warfare began. About 8:00 a.m., Tiger Hill opened big gun fire on Lion

and Purple forts which was immediately answered by the Imperials and a good brisk exchange of shot and shell began. From our position abreast Lion we could plainly see her batteries, the men working them, and the rebel shells exploding on the hill. Lion Hill obscured our view of Purple Hill but we could see her shots hitting on Tiger. Some really good shooting was done. The rebel gun fire tore three large gaps in Nanking's wall; one shrapnel burst  the midst of a battery on Lion Hill killing a few men and disabling a gun. A few shots went wild of course; one landed in the foreign settlement about fifty yards from the German Consulate. We could not determine the damage on Tiger Hill but could see dirt fly where the shells burst. The firing stopped about noon on both sides. Early in the afternoon the rebels attempted a sortie on the city through the holes in the walls, made during the bombardment, but were repulsed with a loss estimated at four hundred and fifty. In this engagement General Wang was killed on the Imperial side. This ended the fighting on Sunday.

During the early part of the morning's amusement all hands aboard the ALBANY manned the rails and rigging loudly cheering both sides and making such remarks as, "Go to it Kid", "I'm betting on you old boy", etc., but like everything else the novelty soon wore off and most of the boys went below to write letters or play cards; evidently preferring those diversions to watching a battle with the temperature at freezing point.

Monday, November 27th, about 8:30 a.m., the rebel fleet, twelve small ships, hove in sight from down the river and anchored out of gun shot from Lion Hill. About 11:00 a.m., the American Consul's Chinese servant came aboard ship and announced that ~~was~~ would commence again after tiffin. All was quiet around the forts, as advertised, until 2:15 p.m., when Tiger Hill started barking. The Imperialists proved to be on the job by answering at once with their guns on Lion and Purple. Three shots were fired at the rebel fleet, all falling about five thousand yards short. The firing continued about an hour and a half.

A blood curdling side show was given on the water front about 4:30 in the afternoon by a squad of Imperial soldiers who dragged some

sort of a prisoner down to the dock in front of the cable station, forced him to his knees, cut his head off and kicked him into the river, despite strenuous vocal objections on his part.

Monday's firing did little damage to either side as far as we could see. The Commanders of the foreign men-o'-war in port held a conference and decided to move out of range in case the rebel fleet attempted to come up the river and shell the city. Irregular firing was heard all night Monday.

At 10:30 Tuesday morning we moved our berth three miles up stream out of range of a possible naval attack. Our position gave us a good panoramic view of the whole situation but we were too far away to clearly see what was going on. The American Consul reported the capture of Purple Hill by the rebels at about 11:00 o'clock in the morning. This seemed to place General Chang Shun in an embarrassing situation. On his last stand at Lion Hill he was completely surrounded by the enemy and absolutely cut off from supplies. Firing continued intermittently all day Tuesday.

Heavy firing commenced midnight Tuesday and continued up to 5:00 o'clock Wednesday morning. Wednesday morning, with strong glasses, a rebel movement was made out along the beach below Hanking which by noon proved to be a strong landing party. The Imperialists opened fire on this force at 12:45 p.m., and kept things pretty lively for three quarters of an hour when firing ceased altogether. We concluded that the rebels were either repulsed or the Imperials were holding their fire for a direct charge on the hill. The rebel batteries on Tiger and Purple Hills covered their infantry movement with heavy fire.

An ominous calm prevailed until 3:00 a.m., Thursday when the rebel fleet came up in range of Lion and rapidly shelled the hill and city for two hours when they retired. The flashes of fire from the ships and forts made a strong picture from our position. Exactly as the time ball dropped, Noon of Thanksgiving Day, the Imperial torpedo magazine, at the foot of Lion Hill, went up in the air with a tremendous explosion, that seemed to shake Earth's very foundation, but when the smoke and debris cleared away, the golden flag of China

was still doing business on the old stand.

A few days before the siege began, the Imperials had stationed about four thousand men around Pukow, a town opposite Nanking, to hold that side of the river. Thursday night and all day Friday a fierce engagement took place between these men and the rebel forces which resulted in a partial victory for the rebels; the Imperialists retiring inland. Up to midnight Friday a heavy fire kept up around Nanking. About ten minutes after seven, Saturday morning, the Imperial flag on Lion Hill was struck and a white flag went up in its place. The rebels soon swarmed up the hill and by eight o'clock the whole city was alive with rebel flags proclaiming that Nanking had fallen to the new cause. We weighed anchor Saturday afternoon and took our old anchorage opposite the city. The conditions in the streets of Nanking were frightful. Dead bodies were lying about all over the town and hillside; a gruesome head was suspended over the West gate and everywhere signs of the bombardment and slaughter attendant to the capture could be seen.

We learned that General Chang Shun had escaped from the town about 2:00 o'clock Saturday morning and at eight o'clock was four miles inland from Pukow with a thousand of his troops. It is unofficially said that he was aided in his escape by the Commander of the Japanese cruiser "AKITSUSHIMA". General Chang Shun is one of the most notorious tyrants in China. During the siege of Nanking he beheaded seven hundred and eighteen people (two hundred and fifty of these were Chinese students just returned from two years schooling in Japan). It was reported from good source that he actually decapitated his own gunners who failed to hit the target. The casualties on either side are unknown but will likely reach well up in the thousands.