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Admiralty, September 6, 1854.

DESPATCHES, of which the following are copies or extracts, have been received from Vice-Admiral Sir Charles Napier, K.C.B., Commander-in-Chief of Her Majesty's Ships and Vessels in the Baltic :

RECONNAISSANCE OF THE ENEMY'S GUN BOATS AND STEAMERS AT ABO.

No. 410. *Duke of Wellington, Led Sund, August 27, 1854.*

HAVING received information that Russian troops and gun boats were amongst the islands, I sent Captain Scott with a small squadron, as per margin,* to find them out, and I beg to enclose his very able report.

2. Captain Scott threaded his way through the islands in a most persevering manner, as their Lordships will see by the chart I send ; his ships were repeatedly on shore, and the Odin no less than nine times, before they discovered the enemy's gun boats and steamers lying behind a floating boom, supported on each side by batteries and a number of troops, covering the town of Abo, where they have collected a large force.

3. I take this opportunity of bringing under their Lordships' notice the very great exertions of the surveying officers, Captain Sullivan, assisted by Mr. Evans, Master of the Lightning, and Commander Otter, of the Alban ; and I have no hesitation in saying, that it is owing to their exertions this fleet have found their way, with comparatively little damage, into creeks and corners, never intended for ships-of-the-line ; day and night have they worked, and worked successfully ; Commander Otter is an old officer, and well worthy of promotion, and Captain Sullivan and his assisting surveyor, deserve the protection of their Lordships.

I have, &c.,

CHAS. NAPIER,

Vice-Admiral and Commander-in-Chief.

*The Secretary of the Admiralty,
London.*

* Odin, Alban, Gorgon, Driver.

Enclosure No. 1 in Sir Charles Napier's Letter No. 410.

*Her Majesty's ship Odin, Led Sund,
August 25, 1854.*

SIR,

I HAVE the honour to state that in pursuance of your orders, dated the 18th of August, I proceeded with Her Majesty's ships Odin, Alban, Gorgon, and Driver, under my command, towards Kumblinge, and the islands east of it.

2. Having procured a pilot at Dagerby, we felt our way on with boats and leads through a most difficult and intricate navigation, in the course of which every ship has been on shore (Gorgon and Odin frequently), but we hope with no further injury than that done to the copper in various places.

3. At Kumblinge and the adjacent islands I was unable to obtain any information of troops or gun boats, but learnt on Sunday, at Asterholm, that a small fast steamboat from Abo was in our immediate vicinity.

4. Rather than return to your flag without intelligence, I resolved to attempt a passage to Abo, and on Monday at daylight, leaving the larger ships at anchor, I took all the masters in the Alban, surveyed and buoyed off a passage for ten miles to Bergham, and then returned for the other ships, but the Gorgon grounding, delayed us for that night.

5. On Tuesday we made our way in safety into the comparatively main open track to Abo, beyond Bergham ; at two P.M. observed a small steamer watching us, and at three P.M., several gun boats moving a body of troops from the point (one and a half miles to the north-west) up to the chain across the narrow entrance to the harbour.

6. Having approached to within 3,000 yards the Alban stood in to sound. The entrance of the harbour was closed by two impediments, the one in front appeared to be a chain laid on a floating platform, the other of stakes and booms, between which the gun boats were stationed at regular intervals, and the steam vessels (four in number) were under the shelter of the points.

7. About 4 P.M. the Alban fired the first shell,

which burst over one of the gun boats. I then commenced firing and was followed at intervals by Gorgon and Driver, but with little or no effect that we could discover, except that of fully answering my purpose in drawing a return from the masked batteries and gun boats. Only one of the former at the end of the boom mounted a gun or guns of large calibre and long range, but which was concealed from our view by a point of land. The others, three in number, about one mile to the west of the boom, as far as we could judge, did not in any one case mount more than five, or less than three small guns. A fort, of apparently eight or nine large guns, at a distance, constructed to enfilade both passages, fired repeatedly, but the shot invariably fell a very short distance beyond the south end of Little Beckholm.

8. As my object was not to attack Abo, but to examine its defences, I contented myself with firing a shot occasionally at the gun boats, or whatever looked like a masked battery. In the meantime Commander Otter, in the most zealous and gallant manner, after going as close as it was prudent in the Alban, pulled in with his gig, sounding just within range of the gun boats and batteries, which were all the time keeping up a constant fire.

9. The sum of the information I have been able to obtain with his assistance, and that of Commanders Cracroft and Hobart, amounts to this—seventeen row boats, two guns each, and about twenty oars on each side, four steam vessels (all small), two having the flag with cross anchors in it, and another was observed steaming away through the Channel to the eastward of Beckholm. Three (if not four) masked batteries, and another I think in course of construction, for the position of which I refer you to the very clear delineation executed by Commander Otter.

10. The Channel appears to be very narrow, and the thick woods were evidently full of soldiers. We learnt that our arrival had been anticipated (as we expected, knowing that we had been watched by a steamer for some days), and that four thousand additional troops had been sent on the previous day, and five thousand more were expected to arrive on the following day; that there were six steamers, five small and one large (the latter we did not see), and eighteen boats and two guns, and eighty men, besides soldiers in each.

The weather was so bad on Thursday, that I was detained under Bergo, and went into Bomar-

sund this morning; when, having communicated with Captain Warden, and received his despatches, I proceeded to join your flag.

I have only to add my very anxious hope that my proceedings may meet with the approbation of the Commander-in-Chief.

I have, &c.,

FRANCIS SCOTT,

Captain.

*Vice-Admiral Sir Charles Napier, K.C.B.,
Commander-in-Chief, &c., &c., &c.*

Enclosure No. 2 in Sir Charles Napier's Letter,
No. 410.

*Her Majesty's ship Odin, Led Sund,
August 25, 1854.*

SIR,

IN returning to your flag from detached service with the squadron you did me the honour to place under my orders, it is my gratifying duty to express to you how well and ably I have been supported by Commanders Otter, Cracroft, and Hobart, in their respective ships, during my late examination of Abo and its defences, and engagement with the batteries and gun-boats at that place; and I beg to offer my humble testimony to their ability, zeal, and great exertions during a week of very difficult and harrassing duties.

I desire most particularly to call your attention to the services performed by Commander Otter during that time. Nothing but the most unceasing and laborious efforts of a clever, indefatigable, and zealous officer could have performed the duties I required of him, and which alone enabled me to obtain the information herewith enclosed, and to examine a place so difficult of access and so little known as Abo, in the limited time to which I was restricted by you.

Under the above circumstances, upon public grounds, and for the advantage of the naval service, which I know you have so much at heart, I beg to urge your recommendation of that officer and Lieutenant William Mould, senior and gunnery lieutenant of this ship, to the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty for that promotion their constant and valuable services have so long entitled them to expect and hope for.

I have, &c.,

FRANCIS SCOTT,

Captain.

*Vice-Admiral Sir Charles Napier, K.C.B.,
&c. &c. &c.*