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*Admiralty, September 10, 1855.*

**D**ESPATCHES, of which the following are copies, have been received from Rear-Admiral Bruce, Commander-in-Chief of Her Majesty's Ships and Vessels on the Pacific Station:

No. 44. *President, at Petropaulovski, June 15, 1855.*

I HAVE to report, for the information of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, that arriving off this port, on the 30th May, I found the place completely evacuated; not a ship, gun, or person to be seen; nothing but empty embrasures and deserted houses.

2. I entered the inner harbour on the following day in the Barracouta, accompanied by Captain Penanros, of the French frigate *Alceste*, when we found three Americans (the only residents left), from whom we learned that the Russian ships named in the margin\* were cut through the ice, and took their departure, on the 17th (5th) April, with all the guns and munitions of war, and all the soldiers and government employes, 800 in number; but of their destination we could obtain no clue.

3. I reached the rendezvous, lat. 50° N., long. 160° E., in my flag-ship, on the 14th May, and the *Dido* and *Pique* arrived the same day; and the *Encounter* and *Barracouta* had been there since the 14th April. Great credit is due to Captain O'Callaghan and Commander Stirling for the zealous exertion by which they effected this object; and their Lordships will remark the promptitude with which they were despatched by Rear-Admiral Sir James Stirling.

4. The French frigate *Alceste* and the *Brisk* were in the vicinity of the rendezvous at the same time; but the prevalence of thick fogs and adverse weather prevented my seeing the Bay of *Acootska* before the 20th ult., when six of the ships being together, I trusted to the prompt appearance of the seventh, and accordingly proceeded to the port, in tow of the *Barracouta*, followed by the *Alceste*, in tow of the *Brisk*. The *Dido*, *Pique*, and *Encounter* arrived the same evening.

5. Commander Stirling, of Her Majesty's steam-sloop *Barracouta*, while separated from the squadron, having, during a break in the fog, looked into the anchorage to see if it was there, took, with much judgment, that opportunity of

reconnoitring the harbour; and I was informed by him of the ships being no longer in it.

6. The *Amphitrite*, from Honolulu, having met me on the 11th instant, while I was in the act of following the Russian ships into the Sea of *Ochotsk*, and given me such information as to convince me that a combined English and French force was already there, instead of proceeding I despatched Her Majesty's ships *Pique* and *Barracouta* on the 13th, and *Amphitrite* on the 14th, to reinforce the squadron of Sir James Stirling at the mouth of the *Amour*. The *Encounter* sailed on the 12th for Sir James Stirling's rendezvous at *Haksdadi*, in the Strait of *Maksmai*, to inform his Excellency of the movements of the other ships, in case he should not have left there. The *Amphitrite* will rejoin my flag off *Sitka*, so soon as Captain Frederick finds her services are not required in the Sea of *Ochotsk*.

8. Resuming the subject of *Petropaulovski*, I would observe that the enemy must have worked in an indefatigable manner after the departure of the allied squadron last year, as we found 9 batteries for 54 guns had been constructed with much skill and labour, by means of fascines strongly bound together, 25 feet thick, staked and filled in with earth, and some of them ditched round, with covered ways leading from one to the other, and trees planted in the rear. Every possible preparation had been made to receive us prior to the orders arriving from *St. Petersburg* to evacuate the place.

9. I caused the batteries to be destroyed, but, having met with no opposition on approaching *Petropaulovski*, I considered it a point of honour to respect the town.

10. I found hidden in the *Rakovia Harbour* a fine Russian whaler, of 400 tons, called the *Aian*, built at *Abo* in 1853. She would have sailed from here three weeks since for *Aian*, with the family of the Governor of the place, and, among other articles of cargo, an engine for a small steamer said to be there, but the opportune arrival of some of the squadron off the port prevented her leaving. As I found her deserted, and her sails, boat, and anchors are not to be found, she will be destroyed.

11. I am disappointed in not having succeeded in opening a communication with the inhabitants, who have fled from the town; for I hoped to obtain the release of the two English prisoners they have among them; I learn, however, from the Americans that they are very well treated.

12. In conclusion, I desire to add that although it has necessarily been a great disappointment to

\* *Aurora*, 44; *Dwina*, 20; *Oliyutza*, 20. Transports: *Baikâl*, *Irtisch*.