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Admiralty, September 16, 1859.

A DESPATCH, of which the following is a copy, has been received by the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty from Rear-Admiral James Hope, C.B., Commander-in-Chief of Her Majesty's Ships and Vessels on the East India and China Station.

No. 77. *Chesapeake, Gulf of Pechili,*
SIR, *July 5, 1859.*

I REQUEST you will inform the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, that having on the 17th ultimo, arrived off the Island of Sha-lui-tien, in the Gulf of Pechili, where I reported in my letter, No. 66, of the 11th ultimo, the squadron had been directed to rendezvous, I proceeded on the following day to the mouth of the Pei-Ho River, with the object of intimating to the local authorities the intended arrival of the Honourable Frederick Bruce, Her Majesty's Plenipotentiary and Envoy Extraordinary, and Monsieur de Bourboulon, Minister of His Imperial Majesty the Emperor of the French, and of reconnoitring the existing state of the defences of the river.

2. These last appeared to consist principally of the reconstruction, in earth, and in an improved form, of the works destroyed last year, strengthened by additional ditches and abattis, as well as an increased number of booms of a very much more formidable nature, a description of all of which will be found on the annexed plan, furnished by Major Fisher of the Royal Engineers. Very few guns were seen, but a considerable number of embrasures were masked with matting, evidently with a view of concealing others.

3. Having sent an officer on shore to communicate with the authorities, he was met by a guard, apparently of country people, who prevented him from landing, informed him that there were no officials nearer than Tient-sin, and on his acquainting them with my wish that the obstructions at the mouth of the river should be removed, in order to enable the ministers to proceed to Tient-sin, a promise was given that a commencement should be made for this purpose within the next forty-eight hours.

On the following day I moved the whole of the squadron up to the anchorage off the mouth of the river, placing the gun-boats inside the bar. On proceeding to examine the entrance, on the 20th, and finding that nothing had been done towards removing the obstructions before referred to, I addressed a letter to the Tantai, at Tient-sin, acquainting him with the object of my arrival,

and requesting free communication with the shore. To this an evasive answer was received two days subsequently.

On the 21st I received a letter from Mr. Bruce, acquainting me that M. de Bourboulon and himself had come to the conclusion to place the matter in my hands, and requesting me to take any measures I might deem expedient for clearing away the obstructions in the river, so as to allow them to proceed at once to Tient-sin; in consequence of which I acquainted the Tantai, that the Ministers having arrived, and the obstructions still existing at the mouth of the river, I should proceed to remove them, using force if necessary, the responsibility of the consequences resting with those by whom I might be opposed. To this communication no reply was received, and consequently on the 24th I took the force inside the bar to prepare for operations, and gave further intimation that after eight o'clock in the evening, if I received no satisfactory reply I should feel myself at liberty to take my own course.

6. On the same night the parties named in the margin,* under the direction of Captain G. O. Willes, cut one of the cables of the boom, marked D in the plan, and blew two away with powder. These last, however, were found re-united on the following day, the supporting logs of wood to which they were cross-lashed being probably moored head and stern. Captain Willes availed himself of this opportunity to examine closely the construction of the inner boom (plan E), and he found it to consist of large baulks, well cross-lashed together, forming a mass of timber not less than 120 feet wide, and about 3 feet in depth. The opening shewn in the plan might have admitted of the passage of a gun-boat, but the strength of the current would, at any time, have rendered such a passage a matter of exceeding difficulty and doubt. Under these circumstances it was clear that no other mode of attack was left open to me, except that on the front of the works, and a subsequent endeavour to carry them by storm, should I succeed in silencing their fire.

7. The morning of the 25th was occupied in placing the vessels in position (see plan), the Starling, Janus, Plover (Flag) Cormorant, Lee, Kestrel, and Banterer, being on a line parallel to the works on the South Fort, and the Nimrod in the rear of the line, with her fire bearing on the

* Chesapeake.—Lieutenant J. C. Wilson, Mr. S. R. Broom, gunner, and 6 seamen. Magicienne—Mr. F. W. Egerton, acting mate, and 6 seamen. Cruiser—Mr. W. Hartland, boatswain, and 6 seamen.