

to H.M.S. "Algerine" in the river off Taku to be ready for immediate landing if required, as the distance at which the ships lie from Taku, about thirteen miles, causes great delay in receiving messages; and sending in men such a long distance over a bar, which can only be crossed even by a steamboat at near high-water, loses several hours.

Matters remaining serious and the gravity of the situation in no way abated, but likely to increase, the Chinese Government being up to this time quite inactive, although the "Boxers" were near Tientsin in force and had committed outrages such as destroying property and burning railway in several places, I proposed to Rear-Admiral Courejolles (French), then the next Senior Naval Officer present on the 5th instant, that the Senior Naval Officers should meet together to discuss the situation and arrange for mutual action. Rear-Admiral Courejolles agreed, and suggested that the meeting should be held on board "Centurion," in which I acquiesced, and at 4 p.m. the same day our first meeting took place, officers of seven nations besides our own being present. The proceedings were marked by great unanimity.

On 5th June I received a requisition from H.M. Consul at Tientsin for a vessel to protect Pei-tai-ho (a watering-place a few miles south of Shan-hai-kuan) as several British subjects and much British property were there. I informed him that I would send a ship there to protect lives of Europeans and to embark them if necessary, but that I was unable to give protection to property, and that British subjects if in danger should embark and go to Chifu. The "Humber," then at Wei-hai-wei, was ordered to proceed there, taking twenty-five marines in addition to her own crew. I sent her partly because she has accommodation for people.

The "Aurora," which had arrived at Wei-hai-wei on 4th June, was ordered to Taku in case a larger landing force became necessary, and arrived on 7th.

Having received a message from H.M. Consul requesting an increase of guard, fifty seamen of "Centurion" were sent to Tientsin on 6th, and also seventy-five marines. The latter were to be sent on to Peking if required by H.M. Minister, from whom I had received an inquiry whether that number could be spared, without stating whether they were actually required or whether he was only making an inquiry in case of further developments.

On 5th June the Consul in a telegram advocated permission being given to guards "to take active measures of hostility," but this I did not accede to, my view being that our mission here was solely for the protection of European lives, and property also, as far as might be, with which my colleagues concurred.

On 6th a meeting of the Senior Naval Officers was again held, and it was generally agreed that in case communication with Peking became cut off it should be reopened, using whatever force was necessary with this object.

The Austrian Captain informed me that he would be glad if his men at Tientsin might be placed under the orders of the Senior British Naval Officer at Tientsin. I thanked him for the honour he paid me by making this request, and I instructed the officer in charge of our guards accordingly.

Rumours were afloat that the Boxers intended to attack the Foreign Settlements at Tientsin on 19th June, the anniversary of the massacres there in 1870. If this was to have been carried

out the community should have been fully prepared to meet them.

On 7th June I received intelligence that General Nieh, who had been ordered by the Chinese Government to march on the rebels then assembled in great force twenty miles from Tientsin, had an engagement and had killed five hundred. It appears from subsequent information that this number was greatly exaggerated.

On the morning of 9th June another conference of the Foreign Senior Naval Officers took place. On the same day, at about 11.30 p.m., I received an urgent telegram from H.M. Minister informing me that unless those in Peking were relieved soon it would be too late. I immediately acquainted my colleagues with the tenor of the telegram, at the same time informing them that I was starting with all our available men at once, and expressing a hope they would co-operate.

The officers and men of the squadron were then sent in to Tongku, in "Fame," "Whiting," and a tug, and about 6 a.m. were entrained and reached Tientsin about 7.30 a.m. After paying a visit to H.M. Consul, the train started about 9.30 a.m. for Peking. The numbers in the train were as follows:—300 British, 112 United States, 28 Austrian, and 40 Italian.

The train proceeded without any obstacle beyond Yungtsun, near which there was a camp of four thousand Chinese troops under General Nieh. About 3.30 p.m. the train had to be stopped for repair of damages to railway a few miles this side of Lofa, and remained for the night.

Two more trains joined here, bringing up the total force to (62 officers, 640 seamen, and 213 marines) 915 British, 25 Austrian, 40 Italian, 100 French, 450 German, 54 Japanese, 112 Russian, 112 United States.

Early next morning (June 11th) the trains proceeded to Lofa Station, where the engines were watered. A fourth train joined here with two hundred Russians and fifty-eight French, making a total force of over two thousand. The train proceeded at 11.30 a.m. A guard of one officer and thirty men (afterwards reinforced to sixty) was left at Lofa to protect the line.

About 6 p.m. when beyond some three miles short of Langfang Station, some "Boxers" were seen approaching; they had previously endeavoured to cut off an advanced party with railway repairing gear, but had failed, and now came to the attack of No. 1 train; they advanced in skirmishing order, and were soon repulsed by our rifle fire, leaving about thirty-five killed.

All trains proceeded to Langfang (June 12th) as soon as the line was repaired. It was found that the line beyond had been much cut up, the damage being apparently done recently by bodies of men as we approached, and evidently not far ahead. As some time would have to be spent at Langfang repairing bridges, &c., Lieutenant Smith, of "Aurora," commanding her men, was sent with a party of three officers and forty-four men to try to get, if possible, to Anting, thirteen miles on, to prevent more damage being done to the line, and to hold the railway station there. He occupied a village on the line the following morning, and early in that morning was attacked by Boxers three times in succession, who, however, retreated on a few volleys being fired, with a loss of fifteen men. At 10.30 a final and more determined attack was made by about four hundred and fifty Boxers, who charged in line with great courage and enthusiasm, but were repulsed with heavy loss, estimated (with those killed in previous attacks) to be about 150. The party being then short of ammunition, Lieu-