

To Captain Shimamura, Senior Japanese Naval Officer, Tientsin.

Pray allow me, sir, in conclusion, to express my satisfaction at this opportunity of sharing our efforts with officers and men belonging to His Imperial Majesty's Navy, who showed that energy and mobility which is well known to characterise the Japanese nation. I trust this may prove an instance of the friendly feeling now happily existing between our respective Services and the forerunner of long good fellowship between them.

I have, &c.

E. H. SEYMOUR,
Vice-Admiral.

Tientsin, 27th June, 1900.

YOUR EXCELLENCY,

I CANNOT let the present occasion pass without doing myself the honour of addressing you, to thank you from myself, and I feel sure I may add, also for the other commanding officers of the various national forces engaged in the late expedition towards Peking, for the very prompt and thoroughly efficacious way in which you, sir, organised, and Colonel Shirinsky, in charge of the relieving force, carried out, on 25th and 26th instants, the arrangements for our return from the west armoury near Hsiku, to Tientsin, with the large number of wounded by whom we were encumbered.

It is not for me as a sailor to give any opinion on a military land movement, yet, as an officer of some experience, I may be permitted to express my admiration of the arrangements of Colonel Shirinsky, and I would request you, as you feel right, to express the same.

Such events are what help to draw nearer to each other civilised nations like our own, and this occasion is, I feel sure, as much a source of gratification to your Excellency as to myself.

I have, &c.

E. H. SEYMOUR,
Vice-Admiral.

His Excellency Major-General Stessel,
Commanding Imperial Russian Troops, Tientsin.

Letter No. 4 from the Rear-Admiral on the China Station, dated 17th June, 1900.

No. 4. "Barfleur," at Taku,
SIR, 17th June, 1900.

I HAVE the honour to report, for the information of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, that on my arrival here on the 11th instant I found a large fleet, consisting of Russian, German, French, Austrian, Italian, Japanese, and British ships, and that in consequence of an urgent telegram from Her Majesty's Minister at Peking, Vice-Admiral Sir Edward H. Seymour, K.C.B., Commander-in-Chief, had started at 3 o'clock the previous morning (10th June) taking with him a force of 1,375 of all ranks, being reinforced by men from the allied ships as they arrived, until he commanded not less than 2,000 men.

At a distance of some 20 to 30 miles from Tientsin—but it is very difficult to locate the place, as no authentic record has come in—he found the railway destroyed and sleepers burned, &c., and every impediment made by supposed Boxers to his advance.

Then his difficulties began, and it is supposed that the Boxers, probably assisted by Chinese troops, closed in on his rear, destroyed railway lines, bridges, &c., and nothing since the 13th instant has passed from Commander-in-Chief and his relief force and Tientsin, nor *vice*

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versâ, up to this date; nor has any report whatever, to my knowledge, come in as to his movements, and the last we heard was that the British and German advanced party, probably about 500 men, had left the railway about 40 miles from Tientsin (Long Fa) for the purpose of making forced marches the rest of the distance (30 to 35 miles) to the relief of Peking.

During the night of the 14th instant, news was received that all railway carriages and other rolling stock had been ordered to be sent up the line for the purpose of bringing down a Chinese army to Tong-ku.

On receipt of this serious information a council of Admirals was summoned by Vice-Admiral Hildebrandt, Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Squadron, and the German, French, United States Admirals, myself, and the Senior Officers of Italy, Austria, and Japan attended; and it was decided to send immediate orders to the Captains of the Allied Vessels in the Peiho River (3 Russian, 2 German, 1 United States, 1 Japanese, 1 British ("Algerine")) to prevent any railway plant being taken away from Tong-ku, or the Chinese Army reaching that place, which would cut off our communication with Tientsin; and in the event of either being attempted they were to use force to prevent it, and to destroy the Taku Forts.

By the evening, and during the night of 15th instant, information arrived that the mouth of the Peiho River was being protected by electric mines.

On receipt of this, another Council composed of the same Naval Officers was held in the forenoon of 16th June on board the "Rossia," and in consequence of the gravity of the situation, and information having also arrived that the Forts were being provisioned and reinforced, immediate notice was sent to the Viceroy of Chili at Tientsin, and the Commandant of the Forts, that in consequence of the danger to our forces up the river, at Tientsin, and on the march to Peking, by the action of the Chinese Authorities, we proposed to temporarily occupy the Taku Forts, with or without their good will, at 2 a.m. on the 17th instant.

Necessary orders were given to the Captains of the allied ships in the river, acting under command of the Russian Post Captain of the "Bobr."

At 0.50 a.m. of Sunday, 17th June, the Taku Forts opened fire on the allied ships in the Peiho River, which continued almost without intermission until 6.30 a.m. when all firing had practically ceased, and the Taku Forts were stormed and in the hands of the Allied Powers, allowing of free communication with Tientsin by water, and rail when the latter is repaired.

In forwarding the reports of Commander Robert Hathorn Johnston Stewart, Commanding H.M.S. "Algerine," and Commander Christopher George Francis Maurice Cradock, who commanded the allied landing force, I wish to bring most strongly to the notice of their Lordships that the brilliant manner in which Commander Stewart handled his ship, immensely contributed to the success achieved, which at one time was extremely doubtful, and his putting her so close under the Forts that most of their shot went over him, accounts for his small loss. He and the Captain of the German Vessel "Iltis" were always contending for the post of danger, and the German officer is, I regret to say, severely wounded in several places.

The Japanese and British stormed the North-West Fort together, and the Japanese Commander was, I believe, the first man in and then assisted Commander Cradock up, when