

Sub-Enclosure No. 1, in Enclosure No. 1, in
Sir Charles Napier's Letter No. 151.

Her Majesty's ship Valorous at sea,
May 15, 1854.

SIR,

I HAVE the honour to report to you that in consequence of thick foggy weather, I did not reach Grisselhamn until noon of the 6th instant.

On landing to communicate, I found that the commandant was absent at Stockholm, but the officer in command, Captain Billbery, very obligingly afforded me all the information in his power, through the interpretation of Captain Fahnelyelm, the Director of the Electric Telegraph, which was to be in operation in about a week. No pilots for the Aland Islands could be obtained, and I believe they are not permitted to serve in our ships of war. The commandant observed that he believed there were not more than 1000 troops at Bomarsund, and that 300 of them had lately been relieved by 500 from Russia; he did not appear to know anything about the gun-boats. The only information I could obtain relative to the Aland Islands was, that the inhabitants appeared to be well disposed towards the English, and that they had declined taking up arms to oppose us. He was anxious to know whether their Post-boat, Eckero, would be intercepted by us. I replied it would not, unless it contained military despatches to or from the Russian Government, but that I considered it advisable that a passport should be obtained from the Commander-in-Chief, to be produced when boarded by our cruisers.

2. I proceeded next morning in the direction of Wardo Island and Bomarsund, but in the afternoon found myself near some shoals, with ice on some of the patches; I therefore anchored to sound, and a fog soon came on which prevented my moving until noon on the following day. On standing to the southward, on the 8th instant, towards Wardo Island, I observed a barque running to the southward among the islands, and on my steering to cut her off, she bore up. I therefore stood in cautiously, and finding a good channel close to some rocks and small islands, I proceeded in, anchoring in 15 fathoms, with Vulture in company, within a mile of the barque, in a good harbour formed by the Island of Saggo and numerous others. On sending the boats, the barque was found to be aground and deserted, in a small cove. Russian colours and a paper found on board proved her to be the Princess of Uleaborg, of 346 tons, with a cargo of salt (part having been landed), from St. Ubes, bound to Abo. Observing a boat pulling away from her, I sent a gig which brought her back, with the master, mate, and three men, the ship's papers and their private effects. I have sent her to Faro, with a prize crew of eleven men from the Valorous and Vulture, in charge of the second master of this ship. The village, consisting of half a dozen cottages, was deserted, with the exception of an old woman. I left a paper in the largest house, on which I caused the master of the captured vessel to state that the English would not molest them, or touch their property, but would pay for anything they had to dispose of, and this was likewise explained to the woman. We also found a cutter, of about 35 tons, deserted and empty, called the Alfred, which the master of the Princess said was a revenue vessel. The barque having been got afloat and brought out during the night, I started the following afternoon with the Vulture, towing the barque, and the cutter not being worth removing I directed her to be burnt.

3. While catting the anchor, three or four

cables' length from where we had been lying, the ship touched on a sunken rock.

4. The prize parted company in the evening, and I proceeded with the Vulture in the direction of Bomarsund. The master of the Princess stated that he had been three weeks at Marsund, and that the Russians had 500 troops there and 1500 at different parts among the islands, but principally at Bomarsund. Some, he said, were in the vicinity of the spot at which we had captured his vessel, and several watch-fires which were kept up during the night on the adjoining hills, which are rocky and covered with pine-trees, supported the assertion, though we saw none.

Next morning, the Vulture in company, I proceeded in the direction of Bomarsund, but found the channels very intricate between the innumerable small islands and rocks, which did not correspond with any of the charts, and which appear to be far from correct. Having no pilot, I proceeded cautiously by the eye and lead, the water being perfectly smooth. About two P.M. I observed a part of the works of Bomarsund, which proved to be two casemated batteries, one of which appeared to have double loop holes below, and both with embrasures on the summit, with chimneys appearing between them, a sketch of which, as I observed it to be from our mastheads, was taken by Mr. Broadrick, mate, is inclosed herewith, the distance was about five miles from Bomarsund. I was led there by observing the mastheads of several vessels over the land. In standing cautiously towards them the ship touched the ground once, but I succeeded in anchoring, in company with the Vulture, about a mile from the vessels. We made out six or seven, and I sent in seven boats from the two ships; they found them deserted, six being small schooners, and the other was a brigantine,—all empty and scarcely of any value. The boats brought out the brigantine and two schooners, the latter had the appearance of being fitted for gun-boats; I therefore burnt them. The others were apparently unseaworthy, except the brigantine; but as she was very badly found, and not fit for a voyage to England, and belonging apparently to the poorer people of the place, whose good-will I consider it advisable to gain, I left her untouched. The lights of Bomarsund were visible above the trees of the adjoining island from the masthead, and with the assistance of a glass the sketch was accurately made.

We started next morning without meeting with any opposition, only a few of the people of the village being seen at a distance. The channels between the innumerable rocks and islands are so intricate, and so different from the positions on the charts, that I considered it unsafe to proceed further south than Wardo without a pilot, nor could I find the channel track by which I entered; fortunately, the water was very smooth and clear, and the rocks bold, so that I could steer through them by the eye and lead, which generally indicated the approach to shoal water.

5. On the 12th instant I met the Odin, and received the rendezvous from her, since which I have been drawn away to the N.W. by chasing several vessels which proved to be Swedes and Norwegians.

I have, &c.

(Signed) C. H. BUCKLE,
Captain.

Rear-Admiral J. H. Plumridge.