

No. 6.

*Mr. Bruce to the Earl of Malmesbury.—(Received July 31).*

*Victoria, Hong Kong, May 30, 1859.*

MY LORD,

I HAVE the honour to inclose a report of a conversation between the Interpreter, Mr. Hart, at Canton, and a Chinese who has just returned from Peking, representing the disposition of the Emperor as most hostile. A rumour is also current here, that the Russians established at the capital have been massacred.

On the other hand, it appears that a certain Ta-ki, a Chinese merchant at Shanghai, who deals largely with foreigners, and who, from his intimacy with the Intendant at that place, and his connection with the North, is generally well informed, states that the Chinese Government will not offer any opposition to our visit to Peking.

I do not consider that my plans ought to be influenced in any degree by these reports. If any inference is to be drawn from them it is this: that there is a strong party opposed to the concessions to foreigners, and a party resigned to them as inevitable; that the triumph of the one or of the other is possible, and will depend on the moral effect produced by the cordial union of foreign powers, and on the fear of a fresh collision inspired by the demonstration of an imposing force in support of our demands.

I have, &c.,

(Signed) FREDERICK W. A. BRUCE.

Inclosure in No. 6.

*Memorandum.*

YESTERDAY evening a Cantonese, Sen-seen-sang, who has for several years been in the habit of lending money to expectant officials, whom he accompanies when appointed to any post, called on me. He had just returned from Peking, via Shanghai, having left the former place on the 22nd March. He informed me that at the time of his departure from Peking, the expected return of the British Ambassador to Tien-tsin, and the possibility of his visiting the capital, were subjects freely canvassed in every quarter; that the Emperor was known to be highly displeased with some of the stipulations contained in the Tien-tsin Treaty; that he was entirely averse to the Ambassador's taking up his quarters in the capital, and that he had resolved not to grant him an audience on any pretext; that military preparations were going on at Peking and Tien-tsin; that the Russians had offered the Emperor 10,000 muskets, but that His Majesty has declined to accept the present, fearing that the muskets in question might be brought to the Palace by an equal number of Russians; that the arrangement of all matters connected with the reception of the British at Tien-tsin, and the preventing of any visit to Peking, had been confided to Sung-wang-yay, a Ta-tsze-wang, son-in-law of the last Emperor; that Sung-wang-yay was at Tien-tsin with 50,000 troops, Manchoo and Mongols; that the batteries at Tien-tsin had been rebuilt, and the river staked in such a way as to render it impossible for foreign vessels to reach that city; that 30,000 "so-lo" troops, men never called out except in cases of the greatest emergency, were under orders to hold themselves in readiness to join Sung-wang-yay if called for; that Sung-wang-yay's orders were to receive the British at Tien-tsin with all civility, but at all hazards to prevent any nearer approach to Peking;

that Sung-wang-yay was very desirous of gaining military renown, and that the Ambassador would be unable to reach Peking without having recourse to arms; that, according to the opinion of some, the Ambassador, accompanied by a few people, might possibly reach Peking without bloodshed, but that a fight would certainly ensue if more than a hundred men were landed; that the country between Tien-tsin and Peking being flat, and the Chinese troops being so much more numerous than any number of men the British could land, it was the general belief that the British could be surrounded and cut to pieces before the completion of one-half the journey.

Seu-seen-sang further informed me that a Russian Ambassador had visited Peking on the 2nd March; that the Russians in the capital, more than a hundred in number, roamed about just as they pleased, much to the grief of the Emperor and the anti-foreign party; and that it was feared the British, if they once effected an entrance, would take an ell for every inch the Russians had arrogated to themselves; that at Yung-chow large quantities of grain had been bought up by the Russians, but that the Emperor having become alarmed had forbidden the traffic.

(Signed) ROBERT HART, *Interpreter.*

*British Consulate, Canton,*

*May 22, 1859.*

No. 7.

*Mr. Bruce to the Earl of Malmesbury.—(Received July 31.)*

(Extract.)

*Victoria, Hong Kong,*

*June 1, 1859.*

I HAVE the honour to inform your Lordship that M. de Bourboulon arrived at Hong Kong on the 26th ultimo from Macao, where he had been delayed by the non-arrival of the corvette and small steamer destined to convey him to Tien-tsin. Admiral Rigault had taken all the stores, etc., out of the corvette when at Turon, and she has not yet completed her provisions, but I trust she will be ready to-morrow, on which day I likewise proceed to Shanghai direct. I have waited for M. de Bourboulon, as I thought it advisable that every step we take in the Peking expedition should be taken by us in concert; and as I do not wish to have any communication with the Imperial Commissioners, should they be still at Shanghai, until my French colleague arrives.

No. 8.

*Mr. Bruce to the Earl of Malmesbury.—(Received August 11.)*

My Lord,

*Shanghai, June 14, 1859.*

I TOOK my departure from Hong Kong as soon as the French corvette "Duchayla" was reported ready to proceed. Foreseeing that I should find on my arrival here questions of considerable importance, which it would be desirable to decide in concert with M. de Bourboulon, I did not think it advisable to precede him, and thereby put myself in the position either of acting in his absence, or of giving as a reason for delay that I was waiting for him. I reached Shanghai on the evening of June 6, and M. de Bourboulon arrived on the following morning.

I found three letters from the Imperial Commissioners, proposing that, instead of proceeding to the north to effect the exchange of the ratifica-