

Nikolai Baron Schilling

MEMOIRS
of an
ANCIENT MARINER

Naval Officer of the Tsar
Exploration in the Tartar Sound
1854-1856

Translated from the German by
Peter Girard

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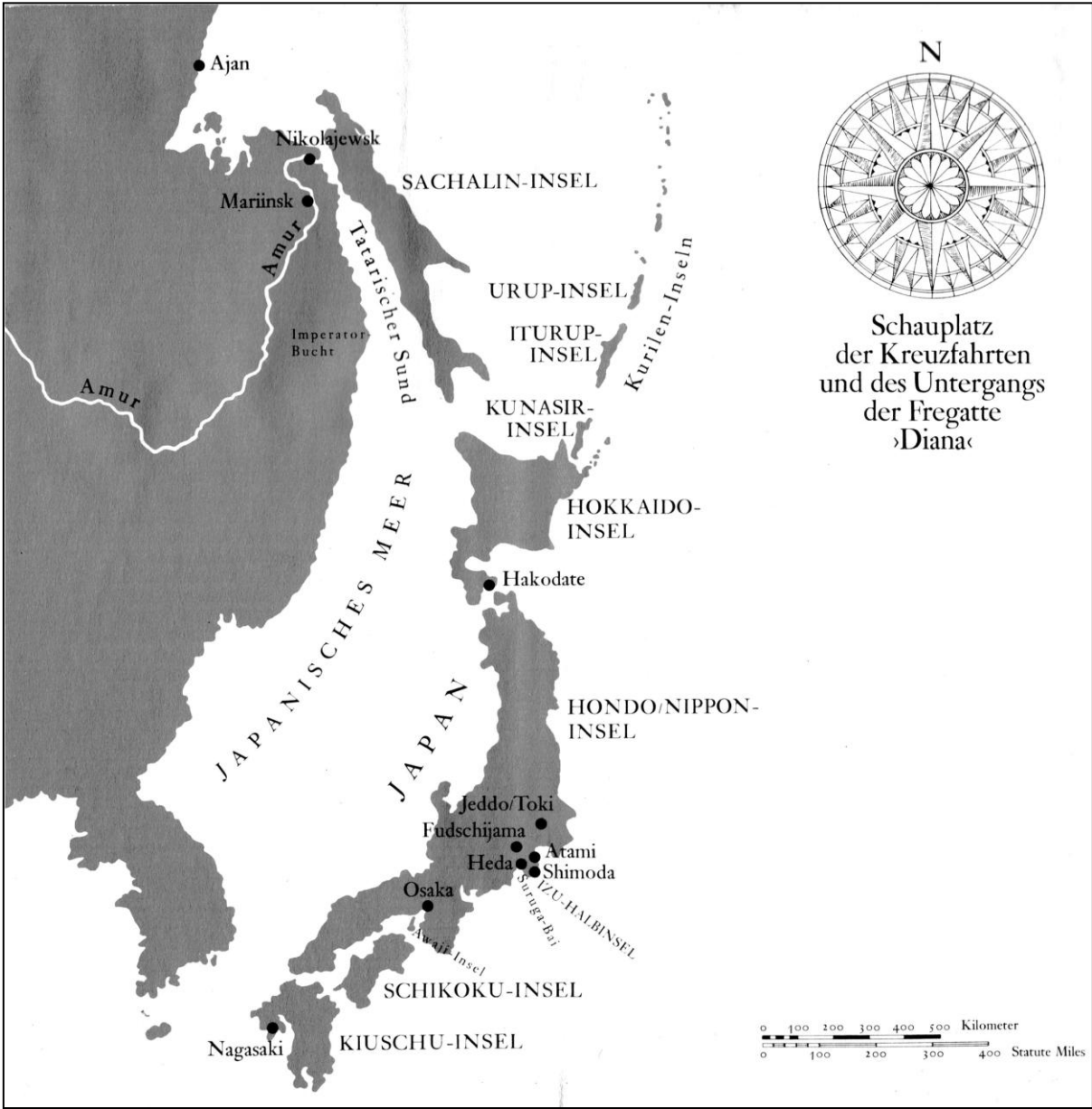
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Dedication and Acknowledgement

This translation is dedicated to the
Association of the Schilling Family.

I am grateful to Helene Baronesse von Schilling for her
approval for me to circulate this translation into English of
the work originally translated from Russian into German
by her father Erich Baron von Schilling.

Peter Girard May 2011



End Paper of the German Translation

Introduction to the English Translation

My grandfather, Carl Wilhelm von Schilling, left the Imperial Russian Navy in 1910 as a Captain, 1st rank. He was a nephew of Nikolai von Schilling. He was also a grandson of Admiral Ferdinand von Wrangell, explorer of the Northern Waters, one-time Chief Administrator of the Russian settlements in North America and later president of the Russian-American Company, who was the Minister of the Navy 1855-1857. It would seem that some descendant of theirs was bound to follow in their footsteps and become a Naval Officer.

I knew little of my grandfather's experiences in the Russian Navy, other than that he had been a prisoner of the Japanese after the defeat of the Russian Fleet in the Russian Japanese war in 1905. And it was by a completely non-related chance that I found myself in August 1959 as a candidate facing the Admiralty Interview Board, at Gosport in Hampshire, in a bid to achieve selection as an Officer Cadet in the Royal Navy. The Interview ordeal lasted three and a half days. The first three were spent in seemingly never-ending medical and psychological examinations and physical and mental and challenges aimed at determining whether the candidates were made of the "right stuff". The last day culminated in The Interview. This fearsome test of mettle was conducted by the Admiral, with eight or ten senior Naval Captains and education and other specialists to advise him. They were all seated around a sizeable D-ended table at the head of which sat the Admiral. The candidate was ushered in to sit to one side of the Admiral, close to but not actually at the table. Questions from all present were directed at probing the candidate on his performance – or lack of it – in the various tests of the previous days. In my case, the interview proceeded quite satisfactorily and I was able to give the right impression. Finally, one of the Captains realised that "The" question had not yet been asked. Leaning into the table in a confiding way and peering up to the end of the table, where I sat, he asked: "Tell me, my boy, have you got any relatives in the Navy?"

I responded with: "My grandfather was a Captain in the Navy." "Aha!" they all cried in triumph.

"The Russian Navy, that is." I said. "Oooh!" was the horrified response.

To which I added: "The Imperial Russian Navy." This elicited a relieved "Aaaah!", from the Cold War warriors and a few days later I was told that I had been accepted to start training the following month at the Royal Naval College in Dartmouth.

In 1972 I was given a copy of Nikolai von Schilling's memoir which had been translated into German by Erich von Schilling, who was my mother's cousin. I started to read this, translating the text laboriously into English and writing it into a notebook as I progressed, but got but thirty pages into it before I too had to

go to sea. It remained untouched until February 2011 when, with time on my hands, I tackled the task in a more systematic way. I had just reached Nikolai von Schilling's account of the devastating earthquake and tsunami of December 1854 when news came in of the appalling damage that had been wreaked by a similar occurrence on the Japanese coast in March 2011.

In preparing this translation into English, I have replicated the footnotes inserted in the German translation, modifying some to reflect today's perceptions. A number of the names of ships and their officers are incorrectly quoted in Nikolai von Schilling's narrative. Certain places and geographical features are given various names, or different spelling, in publications in English and German. I have, in general, left the names of people and the names of ships as they appear in the German translation.

Peter Girard

April 2011

Preface

The author, Nikolai Baron Schilling was born on 1 October 1828, the son of Gustav Gideon and the Baroness Henriette Eleonore von Stackelberg, on his father's estate Orgena in Estonia, which was then a province of Russia. When he was twelve years old, his father brought him, together with his older brother Gustav, to train in St. Petersburg in the Imperial Sea Cadet Corps, which he left in 1848 as a Midshipman after the very strict education in the spirit of the times. He was recognised for his diligence and exemplary leadership and nominated for the Naval Guard. In 1851 he graduated from the Naval War College.

Russia at that time had a relatively small number of large warships. Service on them was therefore reserved for only a few young officers; the rest had to be content with the less interesting coastal service. Amongst those things was the guard on the Neva Quay in front of the Winter Palace in St. Petersburg, where the young officers maintained a manned rowing boat, so that the emperor could at any time be carried to the other bank of the River. The Emperor expressed this desire but rarely, but the post had to always be at full readiness. On one dark, rainy, October night, when strong waves were driven into the Neva River from the sea by a violent northwest storm and, as always in such cases, had caused flooding in low-lying parts of the city, Schilling was performing this duty. Suddenly he saw the tall figure of Emperor Nikolai I appear before him in the darkness. The Emperor ordered him to take him to the flooded area where he wanted to see for himself the extent of the damage. The young officer was well aware of the danger that was associated with the execution of this command in the face of the prevailing bad weather, and the responsibility he had to assume. He himself took the tiller and carried out his task with such circumspection and prudence that, on completion, the emperor allowed him to ask for a special favour as a reward. Without wasting any time, Schilling asked to be appointed to a large vessel. Two days thereafter, he was transferred to the frigate "Diana", which was being fitted out to start a three-year circumnavigation of the world in the spring of 1853.

The experiences during this eventful journey are described in the narrative which follows.

In 1856 Schilling returned to St. Petersburg. In 1859 he was chosen by Emperor Alexander II to be tutor of his then 8-year old son, the Grand Duke Alexei.

He held this post until the Grand Duke reached age of majority in 1872; thereafter he remained personally attached to the Grand Duke, later General-Admiral of the Imperial Russian fleet, and accompanied him on his many travels. From 1882 to 1908 he was administrator of the grand ducal court. After the death

of Grand Duke Alexei in 1908, Nikolai Baron Schilling, aged 80 years, was released from the service. Two years later, on 20 December 1910, he died in Tsarskoye Selo near St. Petersburg.

His "Memoirs of an Ancient Mariner" were published in 1892 in Moscow, in Russian. A copy of this book is in Washington in the possession of Dr. Constantin Baron Stackelberg, of the house of Poeddes, who has been kind enough to give the Schilling family's archives a photomechanical reprint of the edition, for which I express my sincere thanks. To make them available to a wider range of people, I, a nephew of the author, have translated into German and annotated these descriptions by an eye witness of events which, apart from their uniqueness in the history of the Russian Navy, are also culturally and historically notable. During the translation of nautical terminology not always familiar to me, I have received a great deal of valuable assistance from Mr. Georg v. Hennings, of Flensburg, retired Lieutenant of the Imperial Russian Navy, and I thank him for his friendly cooperation. I am also thankful to Wilhelm Baron Wrangell, of Lilienthal, for his efforts to properly locate some place names in Northeast Asia. Anomalies in date information may arise from the difference between the Julian and Gregorian calendar.

Erich Baron Schilling

On the Amur

In 1854 I served in the rank of Leutnant zur See on the sail-frigate “Diana” under the command of Captain Stepan S. Lessowski.

Having learned in May while in the Sandwich Islands of the outbreak of hostilities of Britain and France against Russia¹, we made haste to reach de Castries Bay², where we intended to meet with the frigate “Pallada”. The journey was quite monotonous, and progressed only slowly, particularly after we, as we approached the Japanese coast, fell into an impenetrable fog that surrounded us, unbroken, into the Tatar Sound. Eventually, according to our navigational calculations, we considered we were at the entrance to the bay we were looking for. Our course led directly to the coast, and the ever-decreasing water depth showed that we could not be far from it. Through the dense fog nothing could be seen of the land, and it was dangerous to get any closer to the shore. All the officers and the majority of the crew were looking forward to a speedy termination of the long and uneventful journey and, standing at various points of the deck, maintained a sharp lookout for the appearance of our destination. Often a glimpse of a mountain summit fluttered through the fog clouds before their tired eyes, and then always turned out to be but an illusion. Suddenly, to everyone’s dismay, the command to turn rang out, and the hope, that after a fifty or sixty-day voyage we could finally lie at rest at anchor, began to vanish. Everyone made to carry out the command of the Captain. At that moment, the fog became slightly darker in one direction. The helmsman followed the order to resume the original course, and a high flat mountain became more and more clearly evident in the cloud of fog. As we later established, it was Cape Klostermann, and it turned out that we were very happily placed exactly at the entrance to the bay we were seeking. Even in the clearest weather the course could not have been more accurately calculated. As we passed between the foothills, we suddenly came out of the fog and emerged into clear and warm air. Before us stretched a large bay, in which lay a few scattered islands. I have since often observed similar formations of fog in the Tatar Sound. The extremely dense fog covered only up to

¹ Russia had been in a state of war with Turkey since November 1853. Previously (July 1853), Russian troops had occupied the Danube principalities. Mediation of the great powers had failed. England with France at their side then came to the rescue of the threatened Turkey. In January 1854 they moved their fleets into the Black Sea and on 28 March 1854 the official declaration of war was made following an earlier ultimatum to Russia. (The Crimean War).

² de Castries Bay: a bay in the Tatar Straits (elsewhere Straits of Tartary or Gulf of Tartary). The *Baie de Castries* was discovered on 28 July 1787 by Jean-François de Galaup, Comte de La Pérouse, and named by him after the Marquis de Castries, Minister of Marine to Louis XVI who, after the Treaty of Paris, had appointed him in 1785 to lead an expedition around the world.

the edge of the coast but within the bay, the air was perfectly clear. The transition was so sharp that the fog literally stood in front of one like a wall.

In the bay nothing was to be seen of the frigate “Pallada”. The captain wanted to satisfy himself that it did not lie hidden behind one of the islands, and therefore ordered a cannon shot to be fired. This manoeuvre was repeated, and soon thereafter two weak shots were heard in the distance. Behind one of the islands a sloop³ appeared for a moment, but disappeared again, as if to hide from us. After we had dropped anchor, the sloop eventually headed for us. At the helm sat a Cossack with a Papacha⁴, fully armed, with the rifle slung over his shoulder. In a word, he was so dressed that he could have gone straight on parade in the Michael-Manege⁵. How happy we were, after eight months of absence from Russia, to see again one of our own soldiers! Even more pleased, however, was the crew. When the brave Cossack reached the deck and, to the first officer to meet him, reported: “Your Excellency, the Alexandrov Post which is entrusted to me is all in order. Nothing new has happened.”, some sailors cried: “You hear, he speaks Russian!” A sign of how much our people had become accustomed in foreign ports not to expect any encounter with a person who understood their language.

The Cossack told us that he was an Urjadnik in the Nertschinsk Mounted Regiment⁶ and had arrived only a few days before in de Castries Bay with his command, consisting of six people. He had brought horses, previously unknown in this area. We were told by him that the “Pallada” had already been in the bay, but had left for the Amur estuary. The Cossack also told us that the Governor-General Nikolai Nikolaevich Muraviev (later Count Amurski) had, after the outbreak of war, sent a line battalion, a Sotnie⁷ of Cossacks and a mountain artillery battery with provisions and everything necessary on barges down the Amur. After his arrival in Kisy our under-officer was sent with a small detachment through the woods to de Castries Bay, with orders to keep his superiors informed on the arrival of ships by establishing a Cossack picket⁸ between the two points. In Castries he had found a representative of the Russian-American Company⁹ and some Kamchatka Cossacks¹⁰ on foot, who had been sent

³ Sloop: from the German *Schaluppe*. In this case a small sailing boat with a mast, similar to a cutter, usually used as a tender to a larger vessel.

⁴ *Papacha*: Fur Hat (Caucasus).

⁵ *Michael-Manege*: the Michael Arena in St. Petersburg, the Horse-Guards riding school, which was used in bad weather to parade troops before the Emperor. It was constructed in 1807 to the designs of the architect Giacomo Quarenghi.

⁶ *Urjadnik*: Sergeant with the Cossacks; *Nertschinsk*: Russian town in eastern Siberia.

⁷ *Sotnie*: a Cossack unit of one hundred.

⁸ Picket: a guard or control line.

⁹ Russian-American company: a trading company with the objective of opening up the economic possibilities of the Russian Alaska territory. On the 26th January 1855 in Shimoda Admiral Putiatin would complete a trade agreement with Japan intended to facilitate the shipping

here the previous Autumn at the disposal of the navy, and who had survived the winter without incident. The crew of the boat, clad in red flannel sailors' shirts, handled their oars quite properly.

"I had, in Nertschinsk, never heard that a fleet even existed", the under-officer explained, "and must now patrol around here on the water, to report on the arrival of ships. When we heard your shots, the Company man – an experienced man who has also served in the Navy – said that it was standard practice to respond to each shot, to which end the frigate "Pallada" had left us a small cannon. He advised me to go there to establish to what nation the ship belongs to and for what purpose it had come. He then said if the ship flies a white flag with a blue cross, I could approach safely, but if the flag is red, then they are English, and it is advisable to hide behind an island. So I took my rifle and went off. That's how it is with the Fleet – you have to be constantly on the move."

The captain gave each Cossack a glass of schnapps. The under-officer took a deep breath and said, turning to the officers: "We are highly pleased and thank you humbly. To the health of the Emperor Nikolai Pavlovich, and to your safe arrival."

We liked the people a lot and we were surprised that both the Nertschinsk and the Kamchatka Cossacks spoke perfectly pure Russian; they rarely used expressions from indigenous dialects. On the same evening I had the opportunity to go ashore. We were happy after the long stay in the tropics to find ourselves again in our Northern climate. We went walking in the forest, predominately hardwood and pine trees. Around the Cossack post, which consisted of three small houses, an area had been cleared of forest. They had formed a small clearing where the tree stumps were still visible. Here the Cossacks mowed the high-growing grass on the riverbank, and prepared the winter feed for their horses. On the opposite bank of the river was a village of Giljaks¹¹, from which the strong smell of drying fish, hanging on poles, was brought over by the wind. As the dusk began, we went back to the ship and left the further visit to the riverside and Giljaks village for the following day.

The next morning I was, however, called to the captain, who gave me the task, to find my way with a Cossack through the forest to the Amur and, by following its course, to get to the estuary and to bring the report on our arrival to Admiral Putjatin who, according to the information from the Cossacks, had hoisted his flag on the frigate "Pallada" and was located there. This assignment pleased me greatly, and I eagerly awaited the moment of departure, which was, however, delayed by several hours because the captain was still working on his

connection with the Russians in Alaska through Japanese waters and the opening of Japanese ports. In 1867 Russia sold Alaska for 7.2 million dollars to the United States.

¹⁰ Kamchatka: Russian peninsula in Northeast Asia.

¹¹ Giljaks: Siberian-Mongolian tribe on the Amur and on Sakhalin.

report. At noon it was eventually ready, I collected all the documents and went ashore where I was awaited by a Cossack with two saddled horses.

I fastened behind the saddle a small bag with clean clothes and a second coat and went on my way. A small footpath led directly into a forest thicket. My companion assured me that the area was completely safe and quiet and that it was not far to the town of Kisy where one could buy everything one needed. I then sent my flint service pistol, which I had initially brought with me and now hindered me, back to the ship.

In my pocket was only a package of buttered bread. During the first quarter of an hour I rode in quite a carefree manner. However, the further we got into the country, the forest became thicker and the ground became swampier. The foot path was hardly recognizable. My Cossack dismounted and sought our way by the notches in the trees. I soon followed his example, because it was impossible to ride on, the horse only with difficulty making its way between the trees, constantly in danger of breaking a leg. The branches struck one in the face, and the horse kept on stumbling on the moss-covered, swampy soil. Then, at almost every step, fallen trees formed barriers not only for the pedestrian, but also for the horse who – even without a rider – could only with difficulty climb over these natural unavoidable barricades. I gladly followed my companion on foot, though it was sometimes difficult to lift my feet out of the swampy ground. After about four hours, however, I felt a certain weariness and sat on a fallen tree to eat my buttered bread, which I shared with the Cossack, who constantly assured me we were not far from the Cossack outpost. However, he admitted that he had only once completed the journey – and then in the opposite direction. The notches in the trees, however, showed us that we were on the right track, so after the break we continued on our way. We went on one hour after the other, it had now begun to rain, and the day was visibly heading towards its end, but dense forest still surrounded us without the lake or a Cossack post in sight. To my questions the Cossack always only answered: “The way there seemed much shorter.”

Finally, it began to get dark, and I was getting worried. I was very tired, wet and no longer able to make out the notches in the trees. I went at random and tried to keep in the same direction. Even the Cossack let his head drop. In order not to lose touch with the marks in the darkness, we decided to await the dawn in the forest and to move only as far forward as we could find a less swampy place to sleep. Suddenly in this search we found ourselves on the banks of a larger lake. We were very pleased to make this discovery, calmed down somewhat and rested a little. At the edge of the forest it was a bit brighter, but not for long; rain and darkness took over.

My companion assured me that the post was on the lake shore, just at the point where the road turned into the woods. We therefore had to decide now whether we go left or right to arrive at our destination. I suggested to the left, because I knew that the lake was only just an arm or a small, shallow bay of the

Amur, which we had approached going in this direction. Very tired, but with the assurance that the risk of me breaking a leg on the trees, as it had been while riding in the forest, was no longer there here at the lake, I remounted the horse that I had led by the reins for the last hours. The surface was also soft here, the high grass reached to the shore, and we constantly encountered holes. One of these made my fatigued horse fall, and I hurt my hand. The Cossack went on foot. I tried to follow his example, but was actually no longer able to stay on my feet, and so went back into the saddle. The Cossack who had gone before me showed me by shouting, where I had to turn. I do not know how long we moved forward in this way. I held my watch directly before my eyes and tried to determine the time, but in the darkness I could not see the hands. Finally, I lost all hope of finding the post, and just awaited with impatience the break of day. Suddenly in the dead of night we heard behind us the neighing of a horse and found that in the dark we had passed by only a few steps away from the post at the lakeside. We began to shout. Soon afterwards Cossacks appeared, awakened from their sleep, who showed us into their camp, where they immediately made a fire for us. I lay down close beside the fire on a platform of sticks and watched as the Cossacks – there were three – cooked brick-tea¹² in a cast iron kettle, which they mixed with broken black double buns and a little butter. Wet through and hungry, as I was, I decided to try this brew: it did not taste quite as disgusting as it looked. I could not fall asleep until around 3 clock in the morning after the Cossacks, sitting around the fire and who were hospitably entertaining their comrade, had themselves come to rest.

When I woke up it was already light. I was told that a new companion was ready with fresh horses for me. I immediately stood up and noticed that the saddles and my luggage had been stowed in a small boat, behind which the men had tied two horses. We had to cross the lake, which was narrow at this point, reaching a width of only a few hundred fathoms¹³. The Cossacks rowed, and the horses swam behind the boat. When the opposite shore was reached, the horses were saddled, and we began to ride along the lake in an easterly direction. The weather was magnificent. We made faster progress than the previous day, though in some places swampy ground and fairly deep rivers hindered us. Finally after some hours we reached one of the arms of the Amur, on whose banks several small houses were scattered. My companion explained that this was the town of Kisy. Two companies of a line battalion and a sotnie of Cossacks were camped there. In front of their camp stood guns they had brought from the upper reaches of the Amur. I was taken to the home of the commander of the Mariinsk post,

¹² Brick Tea: from the German *ziegeltee* - a very cheap tea that the Russian soldiers got in pressed tablets as a daily ration.

¹³ Fathoms: From the German *faden*. The English nautical measure fathom measures 6ft. Although the *faden* also translates from the Russian *sazhen* - old Russian unit of length, 1 *sazhen* = 2.13 m (7ft), the nautical measure is likely to have been used here. It is certainly used for depth measurement later in the narrative.

Midshipman Rasgradski, who received me very kindly and who treated me with a delicious lunch, consisting only of fish. During the meal, almost all officers of the line battalion joined us. They wore grey military coats that were introduced during the Crimean War in the whole army. I was particularly interested in the reports of the officers about the difficulties of navigation on Amur, which until then was still totally unexplored.

Rasgradski described the visit of a delegation of Manchus distressed by the transport of troops on the Amur. They had wanted to learn the cause of this unprecedented phenomenon. Rasgradski had tried to persuade the people to continue to travel to the Governor-General in Nikolayevsk. They had, however, been afraid and pressed him for an explanation. Then Rasgradski had asked them whether they were aware that the British had pursued a war against China several years ago? On an affirmative response, he had added that the British were now determined to conquer China. Since this is would not be possible out of Canton, they modified their plan of war and wanted to try to invade the country from the north through Russian territory. To prevent this, the Russians were forced to occupy the Amur estuary. The Manchurians seemed to have been satisfied by this explanation and had believed that their government must certainly be grateful to the Russian for this measure and perhaps would even support it by the delegation of reserve units. Rasgradski asked me to spend the night with him, and was only reluctantly ready to place at my disposal a boat for the second leg of the journey the same evening. In the only store the Russian American Company maintained in Kisy, all was sold out long ago. Therefore, Rasgradski gave me, for the continuation of the journey, a copper tea-kettle as well as some tea and sugar – from the supplies he still held and from which he had recently only drawn on festive days. I only accepted all this because Rasgradski, together with some officers of the line battalion, wanted to visit our frigate in Castries soon and I could give him a proper requisition to the treasurer of our officer's mess to supply him with tea, sugar and all necessities.

At 7 clock in the evening I was accompanied to the river bank, where a Giljak boat with four rowers already awaited me. In the middle of the boat a place had been prepared for me on a straw mat. After I had taken leave of all, we went on our way, relying more on the flow of the river than on the short oars of the Giljak boat. I faced a trip of nearly 300 verst¹⁴ in this flat boat built from just three timber boards. The crew was very mixed, both from their appearance as well as to their origin: one rower tall, dark and blond, dressed in a military cloak, came from the government of Viatka and another, a tanned and very alert Cossack in a sailor shirt, came from Kamchatka; the third was a talkative and extremely cowardly Tungus¹⁵, while the fourth was a quiet and silent Gold¹⁶. Rasgradski

¹⁴ Verst: German *werst* from Russian *versta* - old Russian measure of length, 1 versta = 500 sazhen = 1.067 km (3500ft).

¹⁵ Tungus: Mongol tribe in Siberia

had given me the latter two as interpreters: the Russian-speaking Tungus could communicate in his native language with the Gold, who in turn, knew all the idioms of the Amur region.

Our path led us at first along a branch of the Amur River. Behind numerous flat islands blue mountains, which the Cossack indicated as the opposite bank of the River, could be seen shimmering in the distance. That evening we did not get very far, and it was already dark when we pitched our camp near the village of Paul. This was the first Giljak village I was able to see up close, so it interested me greatly. The houses were quite narrow and between them fish dried in the air over large flat areas. They hung on poles that ran horizontally at a man's height, placed small distances apart. To protect the fish from the birds, all was covered with nets. Among them large, rather ugly, dogs were tied to vertical stakes as guards. The air in the houses was unbearable, since here fish – the only food of the Giljaks – was also hanging from the ceiling. In the middle of the house was a hearth, and in one of the side walls there stood hideous small idols.

The clothing of the Giljaks was generally similar to the Chinese. It was made mainly from dog and seal skins, with the fur turned to the outside. Clothes made from fish skins, mainly salmon skin, were very pretty, but only while they were still new, which one rarely saw, because these people did not have the slightest idea of cleanliness. Men and women were dressed exactly alike. They wore their long hair sometimes completely unkempt and loose, but mostly braided in long plaits, which were rarely given any care. The hats made of birch bark were in the form of a shallow cone, with ornaments made of the same material at the top. On the ears men and women wore copper rings with a diameter of about two zoll¹⁷; sometimes they were decorated with glass beads. The women also pulled large rings through their noses.

In the middle of the village a bear was shown to me in a small shed made from hewn timbers – the indispensable accessory for any Giljak settlement. Both the bear and all the dogs were fed only on fish. The Giljaks revered the bear as a god and gave it the best bits. In winter a celebration, to which the neighbours from the surrounding villages also used to come, was held in its honour. The bear, tied to a block of wood, was led round a campfire to singing and dancing and was continuously shot at with arrows, until it fell dead. Then it was eaten. Such celebrations were held only if they had previously managed to catch a young bear in the forest to replace the old one, because there could be no settlement without Bears.

The Giljaks knew only how to barter at that time; coins were used only as decoration on the clothing. So, in order to get fish, I always had to give in return some of the tobacco leaves which I had received from Rasgradski in Kisy.

¹⁶ Gold: member of the *Golden* tribe in the Amur region. Also known as *Hezhen* and *Nanai*.

¹⁷ Zoll: probably a loose read-across from the Russian *diuym* = 2.54 cm (1 inch). The traditional German *zoll* = 2.63 cm.

While I was visiting the village, the rowers had lit a bonfire on the riverbank. After I had drunk tea and then cooked a fish soup in the same kettle, I lay down on the ground beside the fire for the night. The Giljaks surrounded us constantly and were so intrusive with their begging for presents in the form of buttons and other little things that I, for fear of being attacked and robbed by the unruly mob, made repeated signs for them to go away. My travel companions went straight to sleep while I kept watch by the fire for almost the whole night and remained awake until I woke the Cossacks in the early morning with the command to keep watch to the break of dawn. After we had drunk our tea, we headed back on our way. The Giljaks did not leave us until the last moment. Their talking and their laughter seemed to me crude and repulsive and did not inspire confidence. I therefore decided not to pitch our night camps in the vicinity of settlements in the future, but further away from them in the forest, which greatly displeased my travel companions.

I had been underway to Nikolayevsk for three days already and had stopped nowhere for any length of time other than to rest for the night. We always rose at daybreak, drank our tea and rowed almost without interruption until about 11 clock, then lay for an hour for lunch on the shore, as we also did at 5 o'clock for tea. Only after it had become quite dark did we lie down for the night.

On the whole stretch that lay behind us, the banks of the Amur were covered with dense forest, consisting mainly of firs and deciduous trees. I saw not a single pine tree. Birch were also rarely seen, although they must have been abundant in the forests, as the whole household of the Giljaks, their headdresses, and a number of small commodities were made from birch bark. The Giljaks made carpets from the same material with which they covered themselves during the periods of heavy rain. I have examined such a carpet. Judging by its size, it could not have been made in one piece; but it was made so skilfully that, despite all my efforts, I could not find a single seam or splice. The bark of the birch there is extremely flexible and less brittle than that of our trees at home. I cannot judge whether that was due to some good process or to nature. Besides the usual flat boats we often met Giljaks with small, birch-bark-clad, boats in the style of canoes that were towed upstream by dogs running along the shore. In the Amur there are numerous low islands with wonderful pastures on which meadow bushes of various kinds grow as well as red currants and wild raspberries. On the banks we saw several small huts and in front of them birch bark baskets, filled with berries and fish pieces, hanging on poles. At the tips of these poles hung a bear skull, and often in many cases there was a damaged boat on the ground. My companions thought they were flooded graves. But as far as I know, it is not customary for the Giljaks to bury the dead; they frequently put them in wooden chests in the forest.

For the second overnight camp I looked for a site in the woods. Suddenly we were disturbed by a loud roar. My companions raised a great cry to scare the animal away, and overwhelmed me with reproaches that I did not want to spend

the night near human settlements. After it had become quiet again, an unusual splash in the water terrified us. We initially thought that a bear had risen in the river but it then turned out that there were fish that leaped in great numbers from the water.

The Amur was characterised in general by its abundance of wonderful fish: people readily gave us tasty salmon and sturgeon for a few tobacco leaves. On the surface of the water, we often saw masses of fish. More than once I watched as schools of very large fish fled before a white whale, which was to be found even far above the river mouth. Its snow-white skin was visible from a distance. Sometimes we came so close that you could clearly see its long head, which was joined by an unusually thin neck to the plump body which was more than one fathom long.

After the second night's sleep, we left early and were not far from our camp site when I saw a steam sloop in the middle of the river. This encounter, in a remote area in which we had so far not even seen an ordinary boat, greatly surprised us. I headed towards the steamer which, when they became aware of us, hoisted at once the Russian naval ensign. Reaching the steamer, I found on it Lieutenant Batschmanow. When he found out that I came from the "Diana" and was on the way to Admiral Putjatin, he tried to persuade me to turn around immediately and go back with him to Kisy. He wanted to convince me that I had not even covered half the distance to Nikolayevsk and that no way existed to continue from there to reach the "Pallada". According to his description, it was impossible, because of the high waves, to reach the mouth of the Amur with a Giljak boat and he alleged that sloops were just not available in Nikolayevsk. Batschmanow showed me an order given to him in writing by the Governor-General to proceed from Kisy to de Castries, and, if he should not find "Diana" there, to leave an order to the commander of the ship, to send an officer to the "Pallada" on a cutter¹⁸, with an appropriate message, immediately after his arrival. He tried to make it clear to me that I could never get to the "Pallada" on the route chosen by me and that I would need at least 10 days for the return trip against the current. All these considerations confused me so much at first that I was wavering and had already almost convinced myself to go back with Batschmanow. But then I thought the matter through again and decided to stick with my plan. I was faced with what an awkward position I would be in if I returned on board the frigate after an absence of several days with the message that it had been too difficult for me to implement the order given to me. Batschmanow was visibly annoyed that, without knowledge of the local conditions, I trusted him so a little as a local guide. He tried to explain to me that I would expose myself to all sorts of unnecessary risks, as the officer sent on a cutter would reach the "Pallada" before me. He even threatened me with the

¹⁸ Cutter: small, single-masted sailing boat, often a tender to a warship.

dissatisfaction of the Governor-General, but I stuck to my intentions, and we parted from each other quite coolly.

That same day I almost regretted I did not heed Batschmanow's counsel. The wind freshened. Up to now I had been protected from the waves in the shelter of the islands, but in the afternoon we had to reach the opposite bank, even though the rowers – among them the brightest of them, the Cossack – strongly advised me first to wait in the shelter of the islands for the wind to lessen. But this would have delayed us a lot. I feared that the officer sent on a cutter from the frigate could get to the "Pallada" before me, and therefore tried to hurry as much as possible. The very high waves worked against the flow of river. I myself took the helm, or rather the oars, and took care to catch the waves with the bow of the boat. The lower of the boards forming the floor of the Giljak boat stuck out much further forward than the side boards with which it was connected only by weak wooden pegs. The bottom of the boat could easily be torn apart by the weight of the accumulation of water on this extended end combined with the action of the waves. I therefore tried to keep the boat sideways to the waves, but then it took on so much water that one person alone could not to scoop it out. But I had only two available rowers, the Gold and the Kamchatkan, as the Tungus was so frightened that he just cried and wailed. I must confess that I myself was also frightened of not reaching the shore, but meanwhile I held the boat strongly against the current and caught the waves at the stern, and we fortunately reached the shore. During the crossing, only I had scolded the Tungus for his cowardice, while the others were silent, but when we had reached the shore, they began to make fun of him. He was not in any way put out by this, and described in a very naive way, the beauty of the river Strelka, where he and his reindeer used to live so contentedly that he never wanted to die, and where such "mountains of water" like this never occurred. He had not left these quiet river banks of his own free will. "What are you going to do in the war, should the English advance here?", asked the Cossack. "I'm going to hide deep in the woods, and they will not find me there." was the reply.

After we rested a bit we set out on our journey, despite the entreaties of the Tungus, hoping for a calming of the waves. As long as we remained near the shore in the lee of high ground, everything was going well, but before we reached the settlement of Tyr, we had to row around a rocky promontory on which there was a strong surf. We were forced here to meet the waves on the bow, and it very soon proved to be that my fears about the resilience of the boat were not without foundation. It suddenly shipped a lot of water forward, the lower plank lost almost half its length, and the boat was swamped in a flash. Fortunately, we were not far from the shore and we were able to reach it with two strokes. When we jumped from the boat, we were up to the waist in the water. We moved the damaged vessel to the land, and I sent the Gold into the village in order to obtain material for the repair. The envoy soon came back with the news that he had succeeded in getting a new boat and asked us to carry our wet belongings there.

Thus we avoided the circumnavigation of the promontory and were able to walk from there through to the village. Soon after that we again had to break the onward journey. The strong wind, combined with rain, forced us to make camp earlier than usual. The rain did not stop all night, and the wind howled horribly. I had already decided to wait for the storm to die down the following day but it cleared up towards morning, and we could continue on our way.

We shortened the rest periods as much as possible and at 8 o'clock in the evening got to Nikolayevsk, a newly created town with few houses. As we approached Nikolayevsk I tried to change clothes; it turned out, however, that the clothes in the bag were wetter than the ones I was wearing which had been slightly dried by the wind.

On landing, I met the Governor-General with some members of his staff. He greeted me very kindly and was pleased with the news that the "Diana" had arrived. I was very happy when he asked me to dinner in a small blockhouse at a covered table in a fairly large room. I ate with good appetite and all the while through answered the questions put to me about our frigate and the trip. The General was afraid that the English could find the ship in de Castries, and ordered an officer to be sent the same evening to Cape Lazarev, so that the schooner¹⁹ "Vostok", due to sail the next day from there to transport coal to Due/Sakhalin, could be instructed to make a halt in de Castries with the order for the "Diana" to go immediately to Cape Lazarev. He ordered me to stay in Nikolayevsk and go back only when a suitable opportunity arose for a return to the "Diana". I thanked the General for his consideration, but asked him earnestly, however, to allow me to travel further on the same evening. He agreed and put his lifeboat at my disposal for me to continue the journey. At the same time, he ordered a food basket with provisions and some bottles of wine to be prepared for me. At dinner, champagne was served. The General drank to the health of the officers and crew of the "Diana". This touched me deeply and I did not know how I would be able to thank him enough for the gracious reception.

During the talks Cape Lazarev was repeatedly mentioned. I was firmly convinced that the cape was situated on the Amur river mouth, so that I failed to ask about its exact location, especially after the General said that the rowers had repeatedly travelled the stretch to the estuary and knew the waters well, so I could sleep peacefully.

After the meal, the General accompanied me personally to the riverbank and bade me a very kind farewell. He tasked Captain 1st Rank Kasakewitsch with the necessary preparations. I asked him if there were a sail, a grapnel²⁰ and a compass on the boat. It was all missing and alleged not even to be necessary.

¹⁹ Schooner: sailing ship with 2, 3 or more masts.

²⁰ Grapnel: small anchor with four arms.

After I had inquired of the stroke²¹, if he knew the passage and he had replied in the affirmative, I said goodbye to Kasakewitsch and took off. I soon noticed, though, that the rowers did not know how to handle their oars properly. In the darkness I could not at first work out what was wrong. To my questions about this I got no clear answers, until I finally lost patience and yelled at the men, whereupon the stroke told me that line soldiers had been detailed as rowers and they were not at all familiar with this activity. The lifeboat, with its properly trained crew, had only just returned back from the estuary after a trip of about 50 verst – against the current – and the crew was so tired that they had had to be replaced; he alone as the leader remained on the boat. And I also realised he had probably tried to refresh his exhausted strength by too large a swig from the bottle. At first I thought of returning to Nikolayevsk, but I knew that no replacements were available there, and I decided to continue the journey, relying on the river current.

After I had convinced myself that the stroke had reclaimed effective control of his senses, I told him to lie down to sleep, thinking that he would be more urgently needed at the estuary on the following morning. I then set myself to teach the rowers their craft. The night was so dark, that we did not even notice when we approached the river bank, and twice ran aground on sandbanks. I therefore ordered the rowers to dig deeper in the water, and could thereby discover in time whether we were in danger of reaching shoals. There was no swell, and by 6 o'clock in the morning we reached the estuary after we had covered a distance of more than 50 verst.

At this point the current had an almost majestic effect. I held to the right, the southern bank. It was about five miles²² to the opposite bank. Before us in the east one could see the open sea, and behind it the coast of Sakhalin shone on the horizon in the bluish distance. I encouraged the weary rowers to reach, as quickly as possible, the high Cape Prong which marks the end of the southern riverbank at the mouth of the river. I mistakenly thought it was Cape Lazarev, hoping to behold behind it the masts of the “Pallada”. A slight swell from the sea slowed our progress. When I got to the Cape and my expectation was not confirmed, I was surprised. I woke the stroke, who by now had been rested completely. When I asked about the location of the “Pallada” he replied that he did not know it and also had never himself even been to the estuary, he had previously merely only seen it from afar. When I had enquired on leaving Nikolayevsk whether the stroke had known the passage, I had of course meant all the way to the frigate. This new answer greatly surprised me. As I was now convinced that the “Pallada” was not anchored where I expected to find her, I assumed that her tall masts would certainly be visible from somewhere on the

²¹ Stroke: first rower in the boat (from the stern), he is the lead rower who sets the pace of oar strokes.

²² Mile: all references to miles are to the “sea mile”. 1 nautical mile = 1.82 km.

shore. So I landed on the cape and climbed to its highest point; I even climbed up a tree there, but still no trace could be seen of the ship. It was about 25 miles to the Sakhalin coast. The mainland shore was covered to the south with a series of steep hills, over which hung dark clouds melding with the shore to an opaque grey on the horizon. East of these misty views some islands could be indistinctly seen. I was completely at a loss: I had never seen a map of the area (there were still none in existence at that time) and I therefore absolutely could not imagine where this Cape Lazarev might be located; it had always been spoken of in connection with the Amur estuary.

All my attempts to learn the location of the frigate, made through sign language in a Giljak village, were unsuccessful. While my men were resting around a fire, I ascended again to my observation post on the tree and made another fruitless search in all directions. I thought that the ship, coming from de Castries, would be unlikely to have sailed past the mouth of the Amur and that one therefore had to look to the south. To decide where Cape Lazarev might well lie – on the shores of the mainland or on Sakhalin – I tried all I could to recall to mind all conversations carried out in Nikolayevsk, but even that was futile. It came at last to me that the night before, while I answered the questions of the General and paid not much attention to the discussions of the remaining attendees, I had – without then attaching any special meaning to them – caught from somewhere the words: “Between the islands the Admiral ran on a sand bar with his gig...”. At that time I had no idea of which Admiral and of which islands the story referred to, but it now occurred to me it could be the islands lying ahead of me, and as the Admiral had used a gig²³ and had not gone on a cutter, I concluded that Cape Lazarev would not be far from here. The islands were in the middle of the bay. In the hope of catching sight of the mastwork of the frigate from them, I left the land to go out into the bay beyond, on which the north-east wind produced a slight swell that would certainly cause experienced rowers no difficulty. My untrained soldiers, who were also tired from the unaccustomed work, could not overcome this obstacle in any way; the waves wrenched the oars continuously away from their hands and set the boat sideways to the seas. The wind strengthened, and the splashes into the sloop so terrified the crew that they asked me to return to shore. Since we no longer made any way forwards, I ordered one of the soldiers to take off his coat and with the help of the sailor constructed a sail: a vertically positioned oar replaced the mast, and a boat-hook stuck through both sleeves served as a yard²⁴. After that I also constructed a second sail: in the absence of ropes I used the harness of the soldiers as sheets and braces²⁵. In light winds I held a course just above the islands. The wind freshened up, and our small sail drove us forward quite rapidly. About 1 o’clock, we approached a small group of islands (I found out later that their name was the Hagemyth). The

²³ Gig: a small rowing boat; term usually used on warships to describe the Captain’s boat.

²⁴ Yards: spars transversely mounted on the masts for securing the sails.

²⁵ Sheet: Rope controlling a sail; Brace: Rope at the end of a yard.

water depth decreased all the time. The high and irregular waves rose to a real surf, which stirred up so much sand from the seabed, that the white caps of the waves looked brown and the splashes coming into the sloop were brown.

My makeshift sail would not allow us to get between the islands under the wind. I decided therefore to attempt the passage between two islands with steep shores. The sailor with a boat hook constantly measured the depth, while the soldiers were doing nothing more than to crossing themselves and praying. I told them to take courage, but I myself feared that we could run onto a shoal before we had found protection from the surf behind the islands. When the sloop was in a trough, the water depth reached not more than 3 feet²⁶. I was conscious that if the boat struck the seabed because of the huge waves, it had either to capsize immediately or fill with water. At the height of the rollers it would not have been possible for a man to stay on his feet. As we approached the island, at the first contact of the boat with the sea bed I urged the crew to jump out immediately and move the craft by hand to the shore. Luckily we were only lying on a sand bank, as a small cape in front of us gave protection from the very strongest surf, but nevertheless it was only with difficulty that we were able to keep on our feet in the water. Had we grounded on the unprotected side of such a shoal, this would have meant our inevitable demise. Once the boat was out of danger, I went to the highest point of the island and from there was on the lookout for the frigate. But all my efforts were also unsuccessful here, and I had about the same picture before me as on the morning before from Cape Pronge. Seven islands lay around; from Pronge the mainland shore first ran down south, then took in a huge arc to the east and flowed wide around our group of islands, apparently meeting the coast of Sakhalin in the distance. The islands I estimated to be half-way between the mainland and Sakhalin. I scanned the whole horizon with sharpened attention, without discovering the frigate, and came to the realisation that it could be sought only on the mainland shore. This stretched so far out into the distance, that it was entirely possible that from my observation post I could not see the site at all.

While I watched the horizon and thought my way ahead, the crew hung up their clothes on the bushes to dry and walked around in their natural state. While so doing, some found a place where it seemed people had stayed recently. Remnants of an extinguished fire and trampled grass gave evidence of human presence. We thought at first that it might have perhaps been Giljaks. When I looked more closely, I discovered, between two trees, a shelter made out of twigs and covered with grass. The stroke said that the leader would probably have stayed here. Some pieces of paper and cigarette butts finally convinced me that it could not have been a native, but probably warship sailors or whalers.

I shared with my companions the food which the Governor General had so generously provided me, and then hurried to continue on our way. We set sail or, more correctly, the “soldier-coats” and first held course in a southerly direction.

²⁶ Foot: from Russian *fut* (German *fuss*) = 12 inches - 30.4 cm.

The proximity of the islands protected us from the waves, but the further we got from the shore, the more the waves took hold. The water depth increased, but did not reach more than 10 feet. I therefore took it that we were still on the sandbanks we already knew. As we had already travelled far from the archipelago and the water still had not become deeper, I was afraid that the whole bay area between the islands and the far distant land to the south was as flat. With the north-east wind, the surf on the downwind shore could put us and the boat in danger, the more so should it not be possible to reach the land before nightfall. It was clear to me that it was useless to look for the frigate in these shallow waters. Therefore we had no other choice but to return to the islands and to wait there for better weather. Because of the unusually high waves, it was important to keep the sloop with the bow into the wind as much as possible, as the moment the boat stood sideways to the waves we would be in critically threatened. I told the men what they had to do, secured both sails and started to row. Everything went well, but it seemed impossible to me that with inexperienced rowers we could make five miles ahead against such a wind. I therefore put one of the soldiers in my place on the helm and took an oar in hand. Due to the inexperience of the new helmsman we were soon almost abeam to the sea, and I hastened to take back my old function. To reach the windward shore was far too dangerous. No alternative was therefore left us but to re-set our improvised sails and press on into the sea in the direction of Sakhalin. This prospect held little attraction, with the ever increasing winds, but was still the least of the existing evils. So I set sail and steered, lying as hard as possible to the wind, to the point where Sakhalin seemingly united with the high bank of the mainland. We sailed like this for several hours. We kept alert for the high waves and were ready to adapt ourselves to them in order not to lose momentum. Judging by the water, we moved forward quickly, but if you orientated yourself on more distant reference points on the coast, you gained a different impression. I was happy that the water depth increased and the seas were therefore calmer. Before sunset, when my selected target became clearly visible, I noticed that the Cape belonging to the mainland was much closer to us than Sakhalin, which seemed in the distance to have been united with the Cape. On closer inspection of the Cape, I suddenly discovered two masts not far from it. I assumed that the sight of the crew was better than mine, which was greatly fatigued by the strenuous search for the frigate and the 24 hour long passage and the almost sleepless night before arriving in Nikolayevsk. I therefore ordered the soldiers to keep a sharp lookout. They crossed themselves, however, continually, without attention to the environment. The sailor opened his eyes wide, but still claimed to notice nothing. Soon I had convinced myself, however, that before us lay a two-master. The sun soon went down, and what had been barely visible masts disappeared completely in the dark. Fortunately, the high dark cape still stood out from the sky, and served me as guide. An hour after sundown, at some distance from the Cape, a two master appeared again to which I now headed, not knowing whether I had a warship or a whaler in front of me. Suddenly, the thought went through me of what to do if it

were an Englishman. I was comforted by the fact that the enemy would suspect from our curious sails that we were only a native vessel and decided to get closer to the ship to establish to what nation it belonged by the call of the guard. If I heard it was a non-Russian language, I thought to hide myself behind the high cape and to look for a place where the surf allowed us to land, and then to take further decisions later. As we neared the ship, I ordered the men to lie down under the thwarts and to remain silent; the stroke to remain at his post and to listen to see if we were called in Russian. When all these arrangements had been made, I suddenly saw against the coast, which we had now approached, a glint of light, then a second and a third and then a number of illuminated gun ports²⁷. The frigate, which I had sought with so much effort throughout the day, was now no more than two cables²⁸ before me. It was not far from the shore with lowered topmasts²⁹. The ship's hull did not stand out from the high shoreline in the background. In contrast, the brig³⁰ "Baikal", which I had noticed before, was more visible, because it was anchored further from the Cape and its rig stood out more clearly from the sky. It should be added here that the frigate was turned with the bow towards me, and that its lights were not therefore visible until I got the broadside view. The ship was not lit above deck.

I have no words to express my joy at this unexpected discovery. The soldiers coats were recovered immediately, and we started to row, but we could only achieve even this short distance with great effort. Finally we tied up to the frigate, or more accurately to a lighter³¹, which was alongside her. When I climbed over the guns loaded on this barge, I fell and, to crown all injustices, suffered an injured knee. I hid my pain with difficulty and climbed across to the ship, where I was received by the duty officer, Gamow. I told him that I had been sent from the "Diana" to the Admiral. No sooner had I uttered these words, "Diana, Diana has arrived!" resounded from all sides. This good news spread like wildfire throughout the ship. I was immediately surrounded by the officers and crew. Even the Admiral hastened to meet me and brought me into his cabin, initially a few officers followed us but they soon withdrew. The Admiral had already eaten, but he had the same dinner served for me and asked just after our trip and the condition of the frigate. He released me after 11 o'clock, with the command to go with him to the "Diana" at 4 o'clock the next morning. Dead tired and with strong pain in my injured knee, I was glad when the hospitable reception was over. But it was still a long way before a rest for the night: in the wardroom the officers had prepared a second dinner for me and there was no way

²⁷ Gunports: openings or embrasures for the guns in the sides of a warship; ports: ship's side openings closed with plates rather than glass windows.

²⁸ Cable: 1 cable = 100 fathoms. (10 cables = 1 nautical mile).

²⁹ Topmast: upper extension of a mast.

³⁰ Brig: two-masted sailing ship with square sails on both masts.

³¹ Lighter: from German *prahm*, a shallow water vehicle for work purposes, for example, a barge for coal or guns

to escape such attention. I now have this gathering with its never-ending questions and answers as a particularly pleasant memory. Only around 2 o'clock was I able to lie down in the cabin of Schlippenbach, who was on watch. When he was replaced at 4 o'clock, he woke me with the news that the Admiral's gig was being prepared for departure and that he himself was even getting up. Even before I had finished my toilet, I was called to the Admiral. He told me, while sipping tea, that he could not take me, since all the places in the gig were occupied because he was accompanied by Leutenants zur See Petschurow and Kolokolzew who had to carry out survey duties during the journey between Cape Lazarev and de Castries.

It turned out that Cape Lazarev is located at the entrance to the Amur bay and not at the river mouth, as I had mistakenly assumed.

After the departure of the Admiral, I rested a bit and then went ashore, where a battery had been established in case the enemy should approach. On the evening of the same day, I met Leutenant zur See Enquist, who had been sent from the "Diana" by the Captain after Batschmanow had arrived. He had missed the Admiral on the way, as he was sailing along the mainland shore, while Enquist was brought by the steam schooner "Vostok", ahead of the "Diana", directly to Sakhalin. Yefim Vasilyevich (Putjatin) reached de Castries after a 14 hour journey, after they had covered about 60 miles rowing. The morning after his arrival he gave orders to raise the anchor after the morning Mass, and went back to Cape Lazarev on board the "Diana". The frigate negotiated all the sand banks without hindrance because several sloops went ahead of her and signalled the depth of the fairway. The "Pallada" had also got safely through this difficult passage without maps in the same way. One can see from this how well the Admiral knew how to adapt to the varying circumstances. Later we will learn how unsuccessfully the English operated in this respect, where not one year later, they failed to push forward to the Amur, although far better navigational aids were available to them.

After her arrival at Cape Lazarev the "Diana" was anchored not far from the "Pallada". I went back to the ship and was pleased by the thank you from my Captain. My comrades on the "Diana" told me that the night before the arrival of the Admiral she had been in turmoil, as a steamer had approached de Castries. The alarm was sounded, the guns crews stood by the cannon with lighted tapers, and all watched the approaching ship with their hearts thumping. The order to open fire was expected at any moment when from the steamer suddenly came the cry in Russian: "Is this the "Diana"?". The oncoming vessel was the schooner "Vostok" under the command of W.A. Rimsky-Korsakov. The alarm was immediately called off and the new arrivals welcomed with a loud "Hurrah!".

The "Diana" had travelled around Cape Horn to the mouth of the Amur. We were sailing in a westerly direction for the whole time and were therefore a day behind the calendar date that was effective on the land and also on the

“Pallada”, which had made its way around the Cape of Good Hope from west to east. After his arrival in de Castries, the Admiral ordered that on the “Diana” the next day was to be Sunday, 25th July instead of Saturday, the 24th. In this way, the 24th July 1854 was removed from our lives.

The “Pallada” was outdated and would not have been able to withstand the enemy. It was therefore decided to de-rig the ship and bring it in to the Amur. I was commissioned to transfer the existing stocks of powder and shells across to the “Diana”, making our own stocks significantly larger. Our four old brass guns were replaced by 68-pounder bomb guns from the Pallada. The Admiral and his staff moved over to the “Diana”. He also took some officers of the “Pallada” with him and most of the crew. We finished the construction of a battery on Cape Lazarev and, having built a pier for their shipment, it was upgraded with cannons out of the “Pallada”. On land, biscuits for our upcoming onward journey were baked in a hastily established bakery. The flour for this we got in Nikolayevsk and transported it further down the Amur on the same barges on which it had been brought there. As a rule, the duty Midshipman was tasked to tow the barges to Cape Lasarev; on departure from Nikolayevsk he was provided with provisions for ten days. In spite of the stormy autumn weather, these not altogether un-dangerous trips of more than 100 verst to the bay, that is almost to the open sea, could be implemented without incidents. The flour was at times too damp, but it could be almost completely consumed in the bakery, and only a small part was in such a poor state that it would have to be used for the preparation of Kwass³².

At Cape Lazarev we were once visited by General Muraviev, whose steamer “Argun” excited our interest, despite all its shortcomings, because it had been built on the upper courses of the Amur where – without workshops – the boiler and the rest of the steam engine were made to Muraviev’s instructions.

From 5th August to 14th September the commander of the “Pallada”, Flag-Captain I.S. Unkowski, constantly tried to find sufficiently deep water to bring the frigate into the Amur. All branches of the river in this maze of sand banks were explored for this purpose, but all proved to be too shallow. During those six weeks of work, the ship went through some heavy storms. The sloops from the “Diana”, which were participating in the expedition, were affected particularly badly by the storms because there was no room available to take them on the deck of the “Pallada”. The worst was a passage along the coast of Sakhalin in the Sea of Okhotsk to study the northern arms leading into the Amur river. The boats were repeatedly driven by the storm to the coast of Sakhalin, where the crews were sometimes 2-3 days without food. On 14 September the “Pallada” turned back to Cape Lazarev. The Admiral was now finally convinced that it was impossible to take the vessel into the Amur. He therefore decided to leave the crew in Nikolayevsk for the winter, but to bring the frigate into Emperor’s Bay³³.

³² Kwass: Russian drink made from fermented bread, flour, malt, etc.

³³ Emperor’s Bay: *Imperator Bucht* now Sovetskaya Gavan, a port on the Strait of Tartary.

To this end, S.S. Lessowski moved across to the “Pallada” with part of our crew and, under the protection of the “Diana”, left the inhospitable shores of Cape Lazarev on 24 September. On the evening of that day we reached de Castries, and the next day we were in Emperor’s Bay, which could have been a first-class port if it had not been frozen for a lengthy period of the year. We brought the “Pallada” into one of the bays of this harbour, the Konstantinov Bay, where, not far from the shore, there was still a water depth of 4 fathoms. In Emperor’s Bay we found some Kamchatka Cossacks. During the winter a serious scurvy epidemic had raged among them, from which many of them had died. Because they were hardly able to survive a second winter there, the admiral took the Cossacks with him, and left an officer and a detachment of ten men to guard the “Pallada”, providing them with food and all necessities. After all the weapons had been removed from the “Pallada”, we said goodbye and sailed for Japan on 3 October.

After a winter without any special events, the guard detachment was brought back the next summer from Konstantinov Bay to the Amur. The above-water parts of the “Pallada” were burned and then the frigate was sunk, so that it did not fall into the hands of the enemy. After the peace agreement of 1856, the English entered Emperor’s Bay.

Earthquake in Japan.

On 9 October 1854 we arrived at Hakodate, where for the first time I came into contact with the Japanese. Their type, their clothes, homes and habits interested me because of their character. No sooner had we dropped anchor, a Japanese boat lay alongside us with a few officials and a Dutch interpreter. The Admiral informed them that he would visit the city with his officers.

The officials shook their heads and explained that this was not possible without the approval of their superiors, to which they were told that the Admiral did not think of seeking any permission, he had expressed his intention merely for information. The officials discussed the matter together and then said goodbye with bows and a continuous whisper. When we left the frigate in the afternoon to go into town, we met a Japanese boat, which tracked abeam of us. The interpreters called to us that it was not possible for the Governor to consider the request of our Admiral. We naturally took no notice of this communication. Guards in kimonos and armed with sabres were waiting on the pier. The officials asked us to come into a building where we had to take places on taburets³⁴ covered with red material. The servants put a tray with tea and sweet pastries on the flat earth in front of each of us. The Japanese are accustomed to settle directly on the floor, so it was not unusual to see a special place for a guest. However, we could scarcely stop ourselves laughing when we had to climb down with a series of acrobatic exercises from the stool and then had to bend down, every time we wanted anything to eat from the tea-tray. The obviously pre-prepared meals showed that the Japanese themselves did not expect that their ban on landing would be respected. A year previously, Admiral Putjatin had already had encounters with the Japanese. He was not therefore surprised at that kind of reception³⁵. The Admiral told us that the officials acted only out of fear of their strict authorities, who forbade any intercourse with foreigners³⁶. The poor people actually tried every little thing to put obstacles in our path. They soon gave it up, when they realised that they were facing strong opposition. After the Admiral had thanked them for the reception, he announced that he now intended to visit the

³⁴ Taburett: a short stool without a back or arms.

³⁵ J. A. Goncharov. "The Frigate Pallas", Stuttgart 1967.

³⁶ Since the suppression of the revolt of Shimabara (1638/39) which led to the eradication of Christianity and strict barrier against all the cultural influences from abroad, Japan was in a rigid police state system. The import of foreign books was prohibited. Other than Dutch and Chinese, and even these only under heavy guard, no foreign nation was allowed to trade with Japan. A law placed departure from Japan punishable by death. Although since the end of the 18th and early 19th Century some relaxation of the conditions had occurred, Admiral Putiatin, when he arrived in Japan in 1853 aboard the frigate "Pallada", observed that the country's development was about 250 years behind that of Europe (see also: J. Krause, in: Postscript to J. A. Goncharov, "The Frigate Pallas", cited above).

city. The officials shrugged their shoulders and whispered to each other, but followed us. As we stepped out of the house, we saw a new obstacle: right across the road, and obviously just built, was a gate fitted with a strong lock. The officials, happy with their resourcefulness, smiled and bowed again. This time, the Admiral became angry. He called our sailors, and told the Japanese that he would command the men to destroy the gate, if it was not immediately opened. It worked: one of the officials took a key from the sleeve of his kimono with which he unlocked the door. Opened to our eyes was a large road that stretched onwards between one-story houses decorated with brightly striped paper. Into the street surged people who, at our appearance, all moved to the side and squatted on their heels. Our walk did not last long. As twilight began, we returned again to the landing place, accompanied by a large number of officials and soldiers who went before and behind us and held a mass of paper lanterns which lent to our progress almost the appearance of a solemn procession.

The next day fish and various kinds of vegetables were brought to the ship. Acceptance of payment for it was refused, as trading with foreigners was forbidden. We kept only the food that we were sent from the Governor, and even then only under the condition that gifts would be given in return by the Admiral. But negotiations on this issue dragged on for almost two days. Finally, the Japanese agreed to allow payment for the food, but they sent back all the money which we had paid previously in some shops for some small things.

Gradually they got used to us: the decorations at the front of the houses were removed, we moved freely around the city and we bought various things in the shops, although sometimes the sellers gave us to understand by gestures that their head could be cut off for making sales to foreigners.

Finally, the representative of the Governor appeared to see the Admiral. We welcomed him with some ceremony. After a lot of good wishes for our welfare and expressions of the joy at getting to know us, to which the admiral had to respond in the same way, the Vice-Governor explained that the Governor would gladly have come to the Admiral, however, he may not leave his residence. The Admiral asked the Vice-Governor to tell his superior that he had been sent by the Russian government to conclude a trade treaty with Japan³⁷ and therefore had the desire to send a letter to the highest government body. He added that he would wish to hand over so important a document to the Governor personally. But as this was not possible, he asked him to receive Captain Possjet on the following day. The next morning, on 14 October, Captain Possjet went to the governor at

³⁷ Already during his visit in 1853, the Admiral had tried in vain to conclude a commercial treaty with Japan. The first, reached on 31 March 1854 by Commodore Perry, leader of an American squadron, achieved the opening of several ports and the conclusion of a trade agreement between Japan and the U.S. (Treaty of Kanagawa in Yokohama). In the same year a treaty with Britain followed and on 26 January 1855 with Russia. With these, Japan began to move away from its isolation and to participate in the development of modern states.

the appointed hour, accompanied by several officers. At the dock in the port, officials in costly silk parade robes awaited us. The houses had been decorated again, and the people squatted down on their heels at the sight of us with continuous murmur as they did on the day of our arrival. We were accompanied by an honorary escort. I went in the procession directly behind Possjet and carried the Admiral's letter and its translation into Dutch and Chinese in a special portfolio.

In the Governor's courtyard a guard was lined up whose front rank was armed with matchlocks. At the entrance were several servants, with all sorts of symbols of the Governor's office in their hands. Further ahead four men held the reins of a little horse with a high ornate saddle and huge stirrups in the form of large shoes.

At the door, the Japanese removed their shoes. We limited ourselves to the cleaning of dust from our boots by the orderlies brought specifically from the ship for this purpose, so as not to soil the clean straw mats, on which the Japanese wore only stockings. At the end of an elongated area, on a lacquered stool, sat the Governor Nori-Oribe-No-Kami (Nori = Surname, Oribe = Christian name, No-Kami = Title). As we entered he rose, and with a deep bow directed Possjet to the opposing stool. We sat on a bench covered with red cloth, standing along the wall. Senior officials were sitting opposite us on a similar bench. All other accompanying persons crouched on the floor behind. The interpreter was kneeling slightly behind Possjet. After the usual phrases and compliments they turned to the matter of the day: I carried the letter to Possjet, who passed it to the Vice-Governor, who placed the document in a lacquered box, which he handed with a deep bow to his superior. With the assurance that the letter would immediately be transported by courier to Jeddo³⁸, the Governor withdrew and the entertaining began. I was surprised that the interpreter always fell with his face to the ground when he spoke to the Governor, and – apparently out of deference – spoke with a barely audible voice, but when he passed on the words of the Governor to Possjet, he lifted his head and spoke a little louder. The catering again comprised tea, pastries and various types of sake (a sweetened rice wine). We also received a small box with smoking materials and small coals, to light the miniature pipes. When the Governor appeared again, to take leave of us, all Japanese present except the very highest dignitaries bowed to the ground. On leaving, we noticed that the servants wrapped the remains of the meals in paper. On our return to the frigate we were given the explanation that this was commonplace in Japan. From Hakodate, we sailed to Osaka in the southern part of Japan. The Admiral had been requested to send the representatives there for the negotiations on the conclusion of the trade agreement. After ten days we arrived safely in Osaka, after we had transited the very narrow strait between

³⁸ Jeddo: now Tokyo.

Nippon/Hondo and the island of Awaji by tacking³⁹ into the wind. In Osaka we anchored quite far removed from the mouth of the river on which the town lies. The Admiral tried to get there on a gig along the river, but was prevented by Japanese boats in the execution of his project and he had to turn back again. The next morning the river mouth was guarded by a number of Japanese boats. This time the officials arrived without an interpreter, so that were able to communicate with them only with the help of a Mr. Goschkewitsch, who had been working for a long time at our embassy in Peking and who understood the Chinese language well. The characters in Chinese and Japanese are the same, but the languages are not. Goschkewitsch repeated in writing what we said to the Japanese. Since in Chinese every word and every concept has its own character and as these are countless, these characters in their entirety are known only to Chinese scholars. Without these impediments such a type of written communication would be ideal for all international relations. The Japanese promised to notify their government of our arrival, but they surrounded our ship with guard sloops, so that contact with the land was impossible. The provisions we had requested were not given to us. Every day, officials invented new excuses to explain their absence. Finally we were informed that the representatives had been sent to Shimoda, where the Admiral was already expected. Yefim Vasilyevich wanted a written notification that the Japanese were also now available. But one day passed after another, without something happening. In this way, we lost two whole weeks, and finally sailed away, without having achieved anything.

The passage to Shimoda was pretty rough. On 22 November, we dropped anchor in the western side of the entrance to the bay – as close as possible to the shore – and secured the anchor chain and the capstans⁴⁰ to the land, so as to have the opportunity to pull us closer. This precaution was considered appropriate in case English or French ships with superior fighting strength were to appear. Our enemies would have probably paid little attention the neutrality of a Japanese port and in any other position alongside we could come under fire or attack from both sides.

The Japanese did not hinder us from moving freely into the city and its picturesque surroundings. After a few days the representatives also arrived, but there were still many barriers to a meeting with the Admiral. Fruitless negotiations about the place of meeting, and all sorts of details of the ceremony, dragged on endlessly. I would just mention a difficulty which is remarkable in its uniqueness. In order not to be unfaithful to their usual custom, the Japanese intended to sit themselves on the floor at the first meeting, but they did not want to admit that we were sitting higher than were they. To solve this difficult problem, we proposed to build a raised area like a podium in a part of the room on

³⁹ Tack: sail against the wind in a zigzag course.

⁴⁰ Capstans: winches for winding rope and chains, with a horizontal drum. A windlass has a vertical drum.

which the Japanese could settle. Our party left us and came back after an hour with the news that the proposal had been accepted. It seemed as if the matter was resolved. In the middle of the night the Japanese appeared again on with many bows and apologies and asked for permission to take measurements from our chairs, so none of the parties needed to feel offended by sitting deeper than the other.

A lot of time was lost with such trifles, so that it was not until the 8th of December that the ceremonial landing of the Admiral could be made. Ahead of his cutter, on which the flag of a Minister Plenipotentiary had been hoisted, sailed all of our sloops with musicians on board. When the Admiral left the frigate, they saluted him, and all sailors were ordered to the yards. On land, the Admiral was accompanied by a guard of honour of the “Diana” with the ship’s band playing a march on the right wing. After the guard marched past him, the Admiral ordered the column to start to move. At the head marched a junker of the Guards detachment, Lazarew, with the ambassador’s flag. Behind the Admiral followed all off-duty officers. Upon arrival at the temple, guards armed with weapons were set up at the doors. The admiral talked for about an hour in the temple and then sent the Guard detachment back to the ship. He then went without any ceremony into another temple in which the first meeting was held with the Japanese.

The next day we arranged a visit from the Japanese representatives. They were received with great ceremony: the ship was dressed, the sailors were ordered to the yards, and a salute was given. The guests were given demonstrations of our artillery training, weapon drills, marching, etc. They were then invited to lunch – the higher officials with the Admiral and the others in the officers’ mess. Their ignorance in the use of forks and knives amused us greatly. At the table the guests, without any embarrassment, wrapped everything that tasted good to them in paper – bread, cake, pieces of meat, preserves – and all that was put in the wide sleeves of their kimonos. One of the Japanese poured oil and vinegar in a wine glass, another liked the mustard so much that he wrapped that in the paper and it also disappeared into the sleeve. They particularly liked the taste of the wine, and they left us extremely satisfied with the reception. The freshening wind and the waves caused by this led us to accelerate the departure of guests and to lower the topmasts and lower yards in the night. This time we got away with it, but in view of the rocky shore so close to the stern, violent waves were clearly threatening. The next day was quieter, but still we could not only not hoist the rigging up again, but also could not remove the topmast shrouds⁴¹, to repair a faulty section.

On 2 December⁴² we had cool, calm weather. Because of the fresh wind, the Admiral was convinced that our position near the entrance to the bay was dangerous. He therefore ordered us to relocate to the north-eastern part, in the vicinity of the village of Kakisaki. To prepare for this manoeuvre, a barge was

⁴¹ Shrouds: strong wire and hemp ropes, to brace the mast to the ship’s side.

⁴² This should read: On 11 December ...

sent ahead. To make it easier to pass a rope through the gun port to the barge, one of the guns on the frigate was moved to the side and placed alongside the hull.

On this morning I received an order to check the anchor chains. I was below deck in the battery and was busy bringing the chains on the deck, where the individual chain links, as they came out of the hawsepipe⁴³, were checked and cleaned of rust and the rivets were greased. The work was in full swing and we were all thinking of nothing else, when suddenly we felt such a strong shock that everyone stopped their activities as if on command. It was as if the frigate was about to be thrown violently against the rocks under the water. The shocks were so strong that the Admiral, the Captain and several officers rushed on deck from below. When I got the feeling that the earthquake was over, I let the work continue and said to one of the men when he was finished: "That was probably an earthquake." Inside, I regretted not having experienced a similar phenomenon on land. A casual glance through the gun ports to the outside, convinced me that even after a while it had not calmed down – the water frothed and seethed in strong currents around the ship. At the same moment came the command: "Stop all work!". I rushed on deck, where a terrible picture presented itself to me. The city of Shimoda, the view we had enjoyed a few minutes ago, was completely flooded, only the upper parts of the houses stood out from the water. Directly in front of us the water was boiling. It was as if the whole sea had turned into a huge, red sand bank, on which the waves played their game. From the quarterdeck came the stern voice of the Captain who ordered the returning barge and cutters to throw ropes across and to lie alongside the frigate. Even before I could come to my senses and recognise what was happening around me, I heard the leadsman⁴⁴ call, we were driven by the ocean currents, and immediately after that the command of the Admiral to drop a second anchor. I could tell him only that I had just been there to overhaul the chains, and hurried to make them usable again. Then the anchor was let loose, and I was ordered to prepare to drop two more anchors. While I was busy with that, there was success in bringing the barge closer to us and to hoist one of the cutters; the other slipped the falls, and the boat tumbled down, fortunately without people. Not until afterwards was I told by my comrades that not only were we spun around the whole time like a top by the whirl of water, but were also driven constantly back and forth by the surging current; first we found ourselves deep in the bay then back again at its exit to the open sea.

At the beginning of the disaster, a Japanese junk⁴⁵ was driven onto the bowsprit⁴⁶ of our ship. She had landed on the anchor chains and was then – torn

⁴³ Hawsepipe: from German *Klüse*, opening in the bow for the anchor chain.

⁴⁴ Leadsman: from the German *Lötgänger*, the sailor who takes soundings with a lead line. In England, the term "lead swinger" is used in the Royal Navy to describe an idler, someone who just stands there, swinging the lead.

⁴⁵ Junk: East Asian sailing craft.

⁴⁶ Bowsprit: a mast protruding obliquely forward over the bow.

apart by this, and taking with it the jib boom⁴⁷ – lost in the floods. We were only able to rescue two Japanese who had held on to our rigging. Soon after that another junk was thrown onto the bowsprit and wrecked. A young, handsome, Japanese was thrown a rope, which he didn't grasp, only indicating by a hand movement to the neck that it might cost his head to deal with foreigners, and sank in sad silence in the floods, along with the remains of his boat. With lowered yards and broken jib boom we did not have the ability to set sail, but a drowning man grabs at any straw: it was ordered to rig the forestay sail⁴⁸. The crew had not yet got to the bowsprit, as we, regardless of the dropped anchor, were cast into the middle of the bay in the direction where the rocky island of Inobasseri lay. We were only a few fathoms away from the rocks when the frigate was suddenly taken back by the retreating current and carried broadside on past the island, where the vertical cliff nearly ripped off the bowsprit (we no longer owned a jib boom). In view of the impending danger, the men were immediately called back from the bowsprit. I had been working below deck and therefore had not noticed that the frigate, which was whirled around by the flow like a top, had made up to 40 turns in the passage of half an hour, so that on deck many became dizzy. Then followed the command: "To the cannons, secure guns for sea!". No sooner was this command issued, than the frigate was thrown over with such force to port, that some of the people and many loose objects were thrown to this side. "All hands on deck!" was commanded, and everyone climbed up as well as he could – some through the hatches, others to starboard through the gun ports. I was busy with my work on the port side opposite the galley and fell against a gun and at the same moment a capstan came close to moving and pressed my foot so firmly in the frame of the gun that only after prolonged efforts did I succeed in pulling it out of my boot. As I crawled through a forward hatch, the reserve parts of the rigging I was lying on were set in motion and almost crushed me. The frigate was in the truest sense of the word on the side, so that the deck was almost perpendicular and the whole crew had escaped out onto the starboard side. Soon the ship began right again and after a short time was in its normal position. Then I heard a moan and crawled below deck again through a hatch, as all the ship's ladders had fallen down from their position. I found some sailors lying under a fallen gun. Our oldest officer had been summoned to the men to lessen the suffering of their situation: one of them had broken a leg, the other had a shattered foot. The cause of this accident was the gun that had been moved from its position immediately before the earthquake and which, while the ship lay on its side, had rolled over from the starboard to the port side. All other guns had been lashed down shortly before and fortunately had not moved from their positions. While we were busy with the injured, the ship lay on its side again, but fortunately the inclination was not this time as strong as before.

⁴⁷ Jib boom: a boom extended over the bow of a sailing vessel for attachment of the triangular headsail.

⁴⁸ Forestay sails: small sails on the bow of a ship.

When I stepped back onto the deck, I saw the whole picture of the destruction: the Shimoda district consisting of about a thousand houses no longer existed, it had been washed away in an instant. All valleys and fields were flooded by water. The whole bay was littered with remains of Japanese houses and junks, with thatched roofs, household goods and trees washed from the shore. All this formed so dense a layer in some places that there was nothing to be seen of the water. The current soon drove this debris to the exit of the bay, and then again in the opposite direction. The tidal waves were divided into two streams by the island of Inobasseri on their way to the inside of the bay and were reunited behind the island into a huge whirlpool that with a loud roaring pulled piled up debris together and devoured everything that was drawn in. Now and then we saw human figures who clung desperately to the remains of junks or clung to a thatched roof. They, too, soon fell victim to the raging elements and disappeared in the waves. Besides the aforementioned Japanese, we were able to save only one old woman who was driven by the current against the ship. One of the sailors quickly tied a rope around his waist and jumped onto the straw roof, where the Japanese woman was sitting. He had hardly landed when the pile of debris was carried even further away by the flow. The brave man and the woman, hanging on a rope, were safely hoisted on board. The Japanese woman was – alternately crying and laughing – in a state of complete hysteria.

Each time the water level fell, the ship almost always lay aground and heeled to one side. The largest heel had been the first time. That was, as it later proved, to have been when the keel was torn off. It is likely that the spare topgallant spars⁴⁹ and other materials brought onboard by the command of Admiral had contributed to keep the ship upright although they broke apart with each heavy list.

I am not able to describe the horror that, without exception, had gripped us all: these terrible events that took place before our eyes, you could take for the beginning of world destruction. To describe the force of the current, at least approximately, it is enough to say that when the frigate lay on its side in a water depth of 4-5 feet, I could see our three anchors – entangled in the chains – at a distance of a few fathoms in front of the vessel. Just one minute later, just as the water began to rise, this whole heap of iron was forced against the right side of the hull, the vertical arms of the anchors were only half covered by the water and the ship still lay on its side. One could see with what a tearing force the current had thrown this whole broadside against the ship, stuck fast on the rocks, although the water had meanwhile risen only by some feet. In the afternoon the water level changed less frequently, the force of the flow had reduced significantly, and the water no longer reached the previous heights. The frigate was still spun around now and then and began to shift, but it moved only a short distance and soon came to a standstill.

⁴⁹ Topgallant: second from the top extension of the mast and its rigging.

After the first heavy list of the ship we had noticed a large, copper-clad baulk of timber floating around in the mass of debris. Since the Japanese vessels were not clad with copper, we feared that this could be a torn-off piece of our underwater structure. The timber vanished so quickly from the eyes of the observers, that we could not determine whether the presumption was correct. At the same moment, to confirm our fears, it was reported that the water level in the bilge was rising quickly. Pumps were immediately set up to empty the space. The work was only interrupted for as long as the frigate was on its side and was in danger of capsizing. That would certainly have happened if the ship had not been un-rigged on the eve of the earthquake. As the frigate only listed to one side when the quickly ebbing water set it on a shoal, we adapted ourselves to this rhythm quickly and only sent sailors to man the pumps when the water was rising. The "Diana" was then driven landwards by the current and a couple of times even got up to the spot where the town of Shimoda had once stood. The ship was held by the anchors and therefore did not run aground. When the water began to fall, all the men were again ordered on deck. The frigate, with all the surrounding debris, was then driven furiously by the flow to the exit of the bay where the anchors held again, and she, having reached a sandbank, listed to one side. At the height of the tsunami the time between the rising and falling of the water was less than 5 minutes. Within this period the flow carried us through the whole bay. In the afternoon, when everything had calmed down considerably and we could once again breathe a sigh of relief, a new, unpleasant, discovery worried us: during the general confusion and anxiety, no one had noticed that the rudder with all its parts had been lost. It hit us like a thunderbolt. At this moment, we forgot all the recent terror and that God had just before saved us from sinking, and the question that now ruled all of our thoughts was of how, with this kind of damage, and especially now during the war, we would again return to the homeland.

When the swell had almost entirely died down in the evening (some minor onslaughts lasted until the next morning), I was sent ashore by the Admiral, where it was clear to me what devastation the disaster had caused: of something more than a thousand houses in the city only a few ruins remained. In places, the stone foundations had even been washed away, no trace could be seen of the street, and all the bridges over the river were swept away. Japanese junks lay with deployed anchors some miles outside the city in the rice fields, where the tide had taken them and where they had to be taken apart later because no other way existed to transport them back to the beach. Among the inhabitants, there was no family which did not mourn the loss of loved ones. In face of the devastation one just wondered that more sacrifices had not been demanded of them and that not all the people had been killed. The city of Shimoda had been stretched out between the seashore and the mountains with, in the middle, a valley covered with fields reaching far inland. At the first shock the people fled straight into the mountains. Fortunately, the majority of the refugees had reached them; mainly old men and children were killed. The cause of the quake was accepted as a volcanic eruption

somewhere in the sea on the south coast of Japan. It had set the water into severe surges and was felt on more or less of all the Japanese coast; the shock had reached its peak in Shimoda. Even on the west coast of America, some disturbance was observed.

On the rocks of the island of Inobasseri it could be seen that the water had risen to almost three and a half fathoms over its normal level. Since an equally low ebb occurred with the outflow, a difference of about seven fathoms existed between the highest and the lowest level in the course of five minutes. Even with the naked eye a significant elevation of the water levels have could have been observed, so that at the onset of tidal waves in the bay the water streamed down the valley.

To be admired was the presence of mind and coolness with which our ship's surgeon, Dr. Krolewecki, during the most intense tremors and general confusion, amputated the leg of the sailor who had been injured by the gun. Even now I remember this sailor, for whom later a very expensive artificial leg was made due to the intercession of the Admiral in St. Petersburg on his behalf to the Navy Department. When he returned to his home after his discharge from military service, I went to the Nikolai Station⁵⁰, to accompany him on his departure. How great was my surprise when I saw the old service comrade there on a wooden leg and with a big box under his arm. In answer to my question he told me that his leg was too precious to use on the road, and he therefore preferred to carry it as baggage with him.

I shall now return to my story. On the evening of 12 December a part of the crew was sent ashore to our six-oar boat, which had been overcome by the tsunami during its return to the frigate, to get it back into the water. The first wave had washed it ashore, where it was left hanging in a bush stuck across the road leading to Kakisaki. The crew was unharmed, but without help from the ship they were not capable of towing the six-man boat through the bushes and running it from the rocky shore into the water. The next day the cutter was also found, which had crashed when we had tried to hoist it onto the ship. It was keel-up and was badly damaged, but could be repaired. Only chips were left from another cutter which had been driven ashore. But most distressing was the discovery that among the various junk at Kakisaki village was also a torn part of our keel. It had attracted the attention of the officers by its end, which protruded from a high mound of debris that covered the water surface in a continuous layer, out to 100 fathoms from the shore. It could not be reached other than with a sloop. Only after incredible efforts was the timber brought back to the frigate. It was then seen that we were missing the tail end of the keel, to a length of 80 feet, together with various parts of the vessel belonging to it. Above the water line there remained just a part of the shattered sternpost⁵¹. The tail section was damaged so

⁵⁰ Nikolai Station: in St. Petersburg, the starting point of the railway to Moscow.

⁵¹ Sternpost: the main, upright piece at the stern of a vessel, usually supporting the rudder.

much that, as already mentioned, water flowed into the ship. Several keel bolts were broken. Some bolts were pulled out of the surrounding timbers and the holes where they fitted were torn. Others were bent severely and pulled out of the keelson⁵². In some places the wood had been crushed almost into a sponge. You can imagine how we felt at these discoveries. What must the Admiral and the Captain feel, on whom the responsibility for the whole crew rested, and this in foreign parts, in a land that for centuries had not be visited by any foreigner!

Part of the crew was kept busy with pumps, but nevertheless men were also deployed on other greater tasks. The barge, which had been damaged during the earthquake when brought alongside the ship, was repaired. Then we started to unload the guns and bring them on the barge to the place where once the city of Shimoda had stood. Everything went smoothly. Officers and crew worked with admirable energy under the guidance of their tireless leaders. From the spare sails, a mat was prepared with lock-stitches, while a really thick layer of tarred hemp was sewn onto double-folded sails, and on the other side, parallel ropes extending beyond the ends of the sails. These were intended to pull the mat up close to the hull of the frigate. The execution of this work was very difficult because bolts, nails and pieces of wood were pinned all over the canvas. First, the mat had to be weighed down with ballast, only then could one pull it into the position described above. While this was going on we searched further for the rudder, and above all for the copper cladding which had been attached to it and whose replacement in Japan seemed almost impossible. If its weight had dragged the rudder down to the depths, we had a diving suit on board.

The tireless initiator and manager of all of this work was the Admiral. He also found time to begin negotiations again over the trade agreement. One had to allow the Japanese people the credit that they would not take advantage of our position to impose less favourable conditions. The matter would nevertheless have been long drawn out had we not succeeded, with the help of various gifts, to elicit from the Dutch interpreters a copy of the agreement which had been completed a year earlier with the American Admiral Perry⁵³. This document was kept strictly secret until now by the Japanese, and they were much more forthcoming after they realised that the contents had become known to us. Among other personally relevant requirements, the Admiral also insisted that we would need a bay near our location where we could put our boat on its side in order to repair the underwater damage. Because of the heavy swell in a south-west wind there was little possibility to do this in the Bay of Shimoda. With the Japanese, everything went in a very cumbersome and slow manner: it took a week before we were advised of Ajiro Bay on the eastern shore of the Izu Peninsula. Kolokolzew and I were then reassigned by the Admiral to explore the bay,

⁵² Keelson: A timber fastened above and parallel to the keel of a ship or boat for additional strength.

⁵³ See note 37.

accompanied by two Japanese officials and the interpreter Tacnowski. We were permitted to take with us two leadsmen with leads and a pocket compass so that we could survey and draw up a sketch map.

The end of the "Diana"

We set off on a Japanese boat and made fairly quick progress along the coast thanks to the favourable winds. On the way we enjoyed the lovely sight of green hills overgrown with forests of blooming camellias, against whose bright colours the devastation of the tsunami stood out even more blatantly than elsewhere. At 11 o'clock in the evening we arrived at Ajiro and saw at first glance that this bay was quite unsuitable for careening. The bay proved to be so shallow that only in its southern part did it offer even flat bottomed Japanese junks a favourable anchorage.

We were greeted by a crowd, with the mayor at the head. It led us to a temple in which a night refuge had been prepared for us and for the sailors. The city had not suffered very severely from the earthquake, only the paper on the walls of the temple showed cracks in places. Our dinner consisted of eggs, cooked sweet potatoes, tangerines, tea without sugar, a few pieces of fish and the inevitable cold rice, which for the Japanese replaced bread. After dinner, we were brought large, quilted dressing gowns and strange little wooden trapezoids. For the Japanese, the dressing gown replaced the bed; wrapped up in it, they lay on the always clean and quite soft straw-mat covered floor to rest. The trapeze then served as a cushion on which the head was supported at just one point above the ears. I did not care for this mode of comfort, covered myself with my coat, put my clothes under my head and soon sank into a deep sleep from which, however, the cold woke me after a short time; this night there were a few degrees of frost outside, which found free access to the interior of the temple through the paper walls. In the morning a thin layer of ice had been formed on a water-filled shell in our sleeping quarters. We rose at dawn and told the officials accompanying us, that we wanted to go immediately to Atami. We had heard of this bay, north of Ajiro, by chance the day before from our boat's crew. Once they had blurted this out, they had fallen into such a fear of the angry officials that they were silent on all other questions persistently addressed to them.

Our escorts did not like our plan, and they tried in every way to divert us from its implementation. Soon they took the opposite tack, using the fatigue of the boat's crew as a pretext, and prohibited them from taking us there. We soon convinced ourselves of the futility of further negotiations, they let the matter rest, and we made our way alone along the road. The officers were quite convinced that we would not go far without them and were therefore very happy with our venture. However, when it became apparent to them that we had not returned, they set about to overtake us. The walk in the fresh morning was very pleasant. The footpath, which snakes like a ring around the wooded hills, sometimes distant from the coast then approaching it again, offered us wonderful views. After one hour, the path began to climb a steep mountain. The bay and the town of Atami

lay before us at the foot of the mountain, a huge column of steam rising from the centre. During a rest break, we were overtaken by one of the officials. We then went with him down to the town, where our unexpected appearance caused great excitement. The people, who had never seen any Europeans, streamed in from all sides, staring at us like marvels.

The bay at Atami did not meet our requirements. After we had visited it, we went to the columns of steam which had earlier attracted our attention. They floated like a cloud over a spring bubbling with tremendous force from the ground. Unfortunately, when we got nearer several minutes later, we saw that the jet was clearly weaker. When we arrived, the steam still rose up from the opening, but the water squirted out only now and then and flowed through a channel straight in to a bath house. If I understood it correctly, the wait was four hours long between each few minutes of activity. I regretted not being able to stay in Atami long enough for it to start to gush again. Without a thermometer one could not determine the water temperature, but to judge by the density of the steam, it must have been not far from boiling point. The taste reminded one of sea water. In the bath house, small rectangular basins, embedded in a floor covered by thin straw mats, were used as tubs. The wallpapers on the walls and screens were painted meticulously. Along every row of tubs were small, wooden channels with very accurately made shutters which the bather could open as desired and allow cold or hot water to flow. The excess water flowed into another channel. The bathrooms were much frequented in the summer by wealthy Japanese from Jeddo. When we were there, no other guests were present, but everything was still kept in the utmost cleanliness and order. After we had bathed and then dined in the hotel, we followed the request of our officials, who were now there in full strength, and followed the same route back to Ajiro. The ice that had covered the puddles in the morning was long since melted, and the sun was strong as we crossed the ridge. We went much slower than on the outward journey, rested often, and only arrived at Ajiro in the evening. It turned out that officials had received instructions not to let us go north of Ajiro in any circumstances, because the government feared any advance of foreigners upon their capital. We stayed overnight in Ajiro and wanted then to return to the frigate. However, it blew such a violent southerly wind that it was only with hardship and difficulty that we reached the village of Inatori in the rowing boats, where the village elder received us at his house. The next day it was too risky, with a Japanese boat, to get around the tip of the peninsula, where the ocean waves were breaking in a strong surf. We therefore chose to land and reach the village of Kakisaki on the Bay of Shimoda on foot.

As our investigation had been inconclusive, the Admiral told us, the next morning, that we should look at the western shore of the Izu Peninsula for the same purpose. This time he gave in to my request and let us take a cutter, so that we could get on with the task regardless of the Japanese. On the morning of 23 December everything was ready for the expedition. We had received food for ten

days for the rowers. At sea, however, it was so stormy that it was impossible to see out of the bay. On 24 December the storm had not abated and we had to wait with patience. In the afternoon, however, the Admiral ordered Kolokolzew, me and the two sailors to hold our departure, and he himself went ashore to use his influence to obtain permission for us to make our way on foot along the western shore of the Izu Peninsula. After a long negotiation the Japanese finally agreed, and by 4 o'clock we were able to get on our way. Just before our departure the Admiral again repeated his instructions. We were tasked to find a bay which had to meet the following requirements: 1. The entrance to the bay should not be visible from the position where the frigate lay. One cape should obscure the other so that no swell would be felt in the bay. 2. On the shore the water depth should be not less than four fathoms in order to allow the ship to be brought as close as possible to the land. 3. The bank had to be flat and not rocky, to set up the careening easily. Understandably, we harboured little hope of finding such an ideal bay.

On the beach four Japanese officials and the Dutch interpreter Tacnowski were expecting us. Each of our companions had three servants with him: one was carrying a sword, another the umbrella and the third the hat of their master, who normally went around bare-headed and rarely protected his head with an umbrella or hat from the sun. In addition, each official had at his disposal several bearers, which were changed every village. We walked along the ravine, where until recently the Town of Shimoda had been located, and then climbed in single file up the mountain. Thanks to the vast number of our companions, the column was of such a length that its tail was still in the valley as the tip reached the mountain top. The meandering footpath was sometimes along steep slopes falling to the sea, but then disappeared again behind the hills covered with bright red camellias. The oaks and some other species of native trees were also similar to their northern species; their bare branches contrasted strangely with the dense foliage of the bamboos, camphor trees, camellias and other plants unknown to us. On the way lay some villages, surrounded by terraced rice fields. The rice grows only on wet, marshy ground, therefore at planting the fields must be kept completely under water. The terraces, whose width on the steep slopes was sometimes not more than two paces, facilitated the irrigation. The water was distributed over long distances through a narrow channel or simply passed through bamboo pipes. Regardless of the weak flow, it flooded first the upper level, then ran to the next and so on until all were wet. As it grew dark, we reached a small river, across which we were transferred in a boat, since once again the bridge had been destroyed by the quake. In the village of Teji, in the house of the village elders, we thought of Christmas Eve, which was celebrated at this hour at home. In the night we were awakened by the sound of bells and tam-tams (a Chinese drum); a fire had broken out in the village, which was soon extinguished. On Christmas Day we got up at sunrise and continued on our way after we had established that the bay here was completely open. The accompanying officials complained to us

of tiredness, but since this drew no response from us, they sat in the litters in which they had been brought. There were two types of them in Japan: large, similar to our coaches, which were carried by 4-6 people, while the small one, something like our cab, consisted of a shallow round basket into which the passenger climbed and tucked their legs under themselves. Four upward reaching rods were brought together at a certain height above the head of the passenger. Through this point was inserted a bamboo rod, the ends of which rested on the shoulders of the carriers. We were also invited to use such a means of transport, but we declined. When we were approaching a village, the leader of the carriers went ahead and blew on a horn. From the village, the response came immediately from the head of the village who, with the help of a similar horn, called together new bearers to replace the previous ones. This was how all mail was carried in the postal system in Japan and the unfortunate postman was constantly on the move. The poor bearers were often dressed only with a blue apron around their loins. As a result of frequent carrying, almost all had formed swellings on their shoulders; some even had festering wounds from which blood was dripping when they put the end of the heavily loaded bamboo pole on their shoulders.

On that day we saw only one notable bay: it was Nagatzuro (*now Irozaki – PJG*), not far from the eponymous Cape that forms the southern tip of the Izu Peninsula. This bay, going deep into the land is extremely narrow, and rocky shore made it difficult to carry out the installation of the winches necessary for the careening. We spent the night in the village of Kora on Meru Bay, not far from the village of the same name. On the day after Christmas the officers that we had woken from their sleep at sunrise vigorously refused to accompany us so early in the morning. They also prohibited their men to show us the path. These tricks so annoyed us that we made off alone with our sailors. We had heard the night before that from Kora two ways led to the Bay of Matzuzaki, of which one, that ran along the coast, made a wide detour. Apparently the officials had expected that we would choose this way and that they thus had the opportunity to overtake us on the shorter route. We climbed a mountain lying behind the village and hoped to be able to orient ourselves up there onto the right direction. After we had already gone quite a large distance, we noticed that one of the officials was, by shouting and by signs, trying to get us to come down and he also indicated the direction to take. Convinced that this was a new trick, we took no further notice of him. As no bay was visible from above, we went down into a valley through which flowed a fairly wide river. Here it was clear that we were lost, and we followed the river with the objective of reaching the sea. This area is an almost never-ending series of villages. Therefore, we were soon surrounded by a crowd, which increased with every step. This thousand-headed crowd was made up of men and women, old men and children and, in spite of their curiosity, so un-intrusive that it did not bother us in any way. As we approached Matzuzaki just such a crowd of curious streamed forth. In the town we learned, through our interpreter, why our officials had got excited over our departure. They were

afraid of being brought to account by their government, if we were gone. To find us, they made off in various directions and also had two villages alerted. Matzuzaki was a very important trading town. Many junks were anchored in the estuary, but the bay would in no way meet the requirements of the Admiral. After we had left the place, more of our escorts caught up with us. They thought that our actions could easily cost them their lives. However, with their comic despair and their eloquent mime, they only excited our amusement. We were really sorry for the poor bearers. This fear, however, had very beneficial effect: from then on no-one ever delayed us even a minute, although any departure was still accompanied by much wailing and lamentation. On that day we visited the Bay of Tago – without success.

We continued north and reached Arari. From the mountain summit we had initially taken the stretch of water to be a lake and were delighted when we learned that it was a bay. Although it was getting dark, we boarded a boat to visit it and found, to our satisfaction, that it met all our requirements. Early the next morning we made a sketch map of the bay. A low-lying, wooded peninsula separated it from the open seas, and, amazingly, the water depth near the shore at the inner side of the peninsula reached 4 fathoms. The only difficulty was that the entrance to the bay was very narrow, so that the frigate would have to turn sharply to enter.

But this obstacle seemed to us not to be insurmountable. When we had finished all our surveys and we were preparing at noon to return home, we learned by chance that a little further north lay the even better bay of Heda. It would not take much time to visit it, because from there a direct way lay across the peninsula to Shimoda. Going further to the north, we had to traverse an extremely high pass. It caused us some difficulty, because the way was blocked at one point by blocks of stone that had obviously been torn very recently from a nearby cliff during the earthquake. The view presented from the mountain peak drove away any thought of fatigue. At our feet the sea raged, still covered by the white foam of the waves which had not yet died down. The land bordered that part of the sea in a wide arc which formed the large Suruga Bay. Between the mountains on the opposite shore the flat summit of Mount Fuji, the highest mountain in Japan⁵⁴, rose majestically. Its peak, the crater of an extinct volcano, was covered by snow, lit brightly by the rays of the setting sun. Among the settlements at the foot of the hill, the village of Arari stood out, surrounded by green in its picturesque location on the small, secluded bay. We could not tear ourselves away from this charming sight for a long time, but the setting sun warned us to leave the beautiful vantage point. Tired of the 25 verst long march, we reached the village of Heda at full darkness and cursed our companions mercilessly, because they had been left behind and only arrived half an hour after us. Only after their arrival could a request be made for our night's lodging. After long negotiations we were shown

⁵⁴ Mount Fuji: in the north of Suruga Bay; 3,776m in height and the "holy mountain" of Japan.

to a temple that had, according to the Japanese people, suffered less by the earthquake than the other houses. In the room where we slept, the wall hangings and the thin paper that the windows replaced were all torn and the walls severely damaged. The next morning, we discovered the fact that the other houses were in fact almost completely destroyed. The bay satisfied us in every respect: it was spacious and its width reached up to 2 verst, the southern part was almost completely hidden, and along the shore we found three places with the depth required for careening. Similar to Arari, this bay was separated from the open sea by a tongue of land covered by rocks tumbled one upon the other. It was probably nothing other than the crater of an extinct volcano. Glad to have done our job to our satisfaction, we walked by the shortest route, across the Izu peninsula, back to Shimoda. As we ascended the mountain again, we enjoyed the sight of the fields that covered its slopes, then we were in a thick forest, and above us was an impressive rock summit. On the narrow mountain paths we often met horses, cows and bullocks carrying loads. The latter were so frightened that they tried to flee at the sight of us and often snorted. One experience I had at that time almost cost me my life: I was going some way ahead of my comrades when I met a bullock loaded with wood, and I pressed myself firmly against the rock wall. The animal walked with evident discomfort past me and grazed me with his load while passing. Glad that the danger was over, I continued on my way unconcerned. An approaching stamping prompted me, however, to turn around and I saw that the bullock, frightened by my comrades, had turned round and was running straight back at me. What should I do now? If I pressed myself against the rock wall, I would be assuredly be crushed – but on the other side yawned the abyss. On the slope, I noticed some bushes and therefore stepped to this side. I waved my handkerchief and a stick, and thus hoped to keep the animal from me. But I was still hit by it and fell down. Fortunately, I managed to grab a branch and thus save my life.

We stayed overnight in the town of Shuzenji, known for its baths. Many hot springs rose there, one of them in the middle of a swiftly flowing mountain stream. The bathhouse was certainly less pretentious than that we had enjoyed in Atami. Here men and women bathed together with children in warm water in large pools carved in the rock, protected from the rain only by a roof. People were not at all embarrassed when bathing in Japan: men and women bathed together in the public baths whose doors to the street were gaping wide open.

The following day, in one of the picturesque valleys through which our path led, several water mills attracted our attention. The rice was pounded with small mortars, which replaced the millstones. There were other, more primitive water mills of a similar nature we have seen several times in particularly miserable huts. The pestle of such an antediluvian mortar consisted of a stone, which was vertically mounted on the handle of a large wooden bucket with slightly elevated edges, in the manner of a scoop, into which a jet poured water from a bamboo

pipe. Once the water had filled the scoop, it tilted through the weight of the water, which flowed out and the stone fell by gravity onto the rice grains.

I was impressed by the beautiful cedar forests of the mountain Amagagi Jama. At the foot of the mountain there was a store famous for its manufacture of straw shoes both for humans and for animals. The Japanese do not shoe their horses, but preferred to fit them, as well as the bullocks, with a type of straw shoe to protect their hooves on the rocky ground. Heavily battered used shoes lay in large piles around the shop.

After we had stayed in Nazi Moto, we arrived once again at Shimoda on the next day, 30 December 1854. There we found the frigate ready to weigh anchor, with a newly constructed emergency rudder that had been made during our absence. The Admiral decided, after he had compared our maps of bays, on the Bay of Heda, because the nearby town was preferable to the village of Arari. In the evening Possjet and Goschkewitsch went ashore to put an end to the negotiations with the Japanese, and early in the morning of 31 December we weighed anchor. The wind was blowing towards the exit of the bay. All would have been well, had not the emergency rudder failed after lifting the anchor.

(A technical description of how the crew produced the emergency rudder, using only ship-based resources, is omitted here in the translation into German. An accompanying note by the translator from the German states that the description of the events is not affected.)

The new rudder itself worked well, but the ship manifestly would not respond, because it was too heavy by the bow. At the wrecked stern, as mentioned earlier, the keel and other parts of the frigate to a height of 4½ feet had been torn away in the disaster. Thereupon we had removed all useless weight from there to lighten the damaged part. Now some of these items were brought back again to put the ship again into proper trim. On the evening of 31 December we made another attempt to weigh anchor, which in turn failed. The stern had to be ballasted even more heavily. This work took the whole of New Year's Day 1855.

In the early morning of 2 January we finally sailed out to sea. Everything went as desired. There was a clear day, the wind was not too strong, and the frigate answered the helm so well that we were all put in a confident mood. In the afternoon we had reached Cape Nagatzuro. Despite the headwinds, the ship turned so well here that we were finally convinced of the serviceability of the rudder. By tacking, we came in the evening to the town of Matzuzaki, where the Admiral wanted to lie at anchor overnight. It was already beginning to darken when we were still in such deep water that it seemed impossible to drop an anchor. So there was no other choice but to go back out to sea. The southwest wind springing up at this time would have been useful to get to Heda. Unfortunately, we could not make use of it because it was too risky, in the darkness, to navigate a coast completely unknown to us. We therefore turned

around and, with increasing wind force, reefed the topsail⁵⁵ three times. From 7 o'clock in the evening until midnight, I had the watch and was ordered to keep lookout ahead with reinforced attention. Since our course lay to the opposing coast, the Captain intended to turn about 12 o'clock. Between 9 and 10 o'clock I gained the impression that the phosphorescent glow on the wave crests on the course ahead was stronger. The idea that this phenomenon could perhaps be caused by the proximity of the shore, whose distance was not exactly known, prompted me to send for the Captain. After consultation with the Admiral, he said that there was no surf to be feared on our course. Not long thereafter, something before 10 o'clock, I received the order to jibe⁵⁶. I set the foresail and turned the rudder a little. The frigate obeyed well at the beginning, but then she no longer followed the rudder, lay on her side and raced through the water. This lasted several minutes, then the tiller, fastened to the upper end of the emergency rudder, was ripped off by the increased water pressure, and control was completely lost. Immediately the order was given for the foresail to be recovered and for the main topsail to be set to the mast. By the end of my watch the phosphorescent lights already clearly marked the surf at the coast. We awaited with impatience the completion of the repairs to the rudder. At 1 o'clock at night it was finally done, and we prepared to jibe. The frigate obeyed, but the control was not perfect and we moved more rapidly towards the surf. Also, all subsequent attempts to go about⁵⁷ were unsuccessful. Every time the ship got up against the wind and lost way during these efforts, a sounding was taken, but without reaching the sea bottom. With each failed attempt to turn we got closer to the coast and finally reached the surf. In the pitch-dark night the water around us looked like a single mass of fire. The Admiral ordered all the sails to be dropped and readied the anchor to be dropped. The soundings were still bottomless, until, oh what joy, the cry rang out: "25 fathoms!". Two anchors were dropped immediately and the frigate soon came to a halt and turned with its stern to the shore, rocking quietly and without touching the bottom. A third anchor was deployed. While the lower yards and spars were let down, I received the order to align the anchor chains. Some of them had to be eased⁵⁸ a number of fathoms. With each vibration of the ship I thought the stern was already on the rocks. After completion of this work, however, it proved that the water astern of us had a depth of 8 fathoms, though close beside us the surf raged strongly. The rigging was lowered, the anchors were excellent, but the frigate groaned and shook every time she was lifted by the huge waves that tightened the anchor chains to their utmost and in so doing pulled strongly on the ship. The situation was extremely critical. The coast was not

⁵⁵ Topsail: middle sail on the foremast. To reef: reduce the sail area by rolling the sail.

⁵⁶ Wearing ship: to turn a sailing vessel to bring the wind across the stern to the other side. The term is used specifically this manoeuvre in square-rigged vessels. Equivalent to the gybe or jibe.

⁵⁷ To go about: to turn a sailing vessel to bring the wind across the bow to the other side.

⁵⁸ Eased: let out.

visible at all because of the darkness. As it got light, we found, to our greatest surprise that we were within a cable from the shore and we were right at the foot of Mount Fuji. With its snow-covered peaks wrapped in the pink light of the rising sun, the mountain looked like a giant steep, downward-propagating cone, that ran into the sea in a sandy, slightly sloping hill. Fate had brought us that night just up to a sandy shoreline. Right and left of us the coast consisted only of rocks that would have completely shattered the ship, had God not have been so gracefully merciful to us.

The picture that presented itself to us was beautiful, but we were not moved by these impressions. We feared that the anchor might not hold or that the chain would be broken by the strong tension. The sails attached under the ship had been torn to shreds, and the water in the hold rose so much that all pumps had to be used. Many Japanese assembled on the shoreline; around noon, soldiers with guns were brought there. Fortunately, the wind dropped noticeably, but against this surf there was no way to get to the shore. We tried in vain to rig a rope across, tried to fly a paper kite, tried it with floats and with a duck with a rope tied to its leg, etc., but each without the least success, being either swallowed by the waves or carried off by the flow along the coast to the east. We tried to drag a new canvas through under the ship, but because of the movement it was not tight enough against the underwater part of the ship and before long it, too, was also torn apart. The pumps had to be checked over and repaired, as their constant use wore them out. In the evening the water began to rise sharply in the stern, and it turned out that the channel through which it flowed to the ship's centre, where all the pumps were, was clogged. The deck in the officers mess was broken through and all the pumps were then set up there. Buckets of water also had to be drawn from the bread store. This work and the transport of all loads from stern to stem lasted all night. To encourage the weary crew, the officers gave a hand everywhere. Towards morning it was finally possible to clean the clogged channel. The water in the bread store began to drain rapidly. Everything was readied by me to cut the anchor chains, should continually increasing flooding put the frigate in danger of sinking. On 4 January, the wind almost completely died down, but the surf still continued to rage with unabated force, and only in the evening did the swell calm to some extent. Now the Admiral ordered Petschurow to take a thick rope to the beach. A cutter, which was immediately slung out, left the ship under his command. All work on the frigate stopped at this moment, and with watchful eyes everyone followed the boat, which could all too easily capsize in the surf. Shortly before the shore the boat stopped and waited for the next wave crest, after which the heavy effort of the rowers would take it to the shore. A few seconds passed, which seemed to us like an eternity, when everything was covered in white foam, but then we saw our brave men, with the help of the Japanese, hauling the boat onto the sand, which they managed to do before the next wave, which would have carried them back hopelessly into the sea. "Thank

God!” sounded through our ranks, all bared their heads as if on command, crossed themselves and then went silently back to their jobs.

The cutter had been badly damaged by the shock, but the crew remained unharmed, and we now had a connection to the land. (At the wreck of the frigate “Alexander Nevsky” on the Danish coast in 1868, the Lieutenants Sarin and Uexküll and some sailors lost their lives when performing the same manoeuvre⁵⁹.) Another, even thicker, rope was tied to the line which had been put ashore and the ship was signalled to haul the end of the rope on board. It was secured to the mast of the frigate and the rescue of the crew started using this connection. As the first, the sick were to be ferried over in the Admiral’s gig, which was tied to the connecting rope. It was already getting dark when all preparations were complete. The Admiral did not risk sending men across without a previous attempt to transport people in this way, and the gig was sent off with a lighted lantern and a paper on which the agreed light signals were noted. After everything was finished and it was signalled to the shore was that they should haul the rope there, the gig soon disappeared in the darkness. But we waited in vain for the agreed sign (two lanterns, one above the other) in order to withdraw the gig again. On the shore we saw such a huge number of bright points moving back and forth over the sloping shore that there was no way to identify the required signal. Subsequently we learned that the Japanese did not dare go out after dark without a lantern. This explained the multitude of bright lights. We tried several times to pull on the rope; it merely tightened and did not yield; in order not to break it, we decided to wait until daybreak.

While standing water was being pumped out, we now started to build a raft from parts of our keel and the rigging. At 4 o’clock in the morning I went on watch (the last that was ever stood on our ship) and was ordered to swing out the lower yards to suspend the rowing boats. When this work was done and the morning dawned, we could see, despite insignificant seas, that the waves still raged on the shore. On the beach we saw our gig, one side had been demolished during the landing. After the newly-built raft was lowered into the water the moving of a part of the crew across to it was started. It was soon realised that this kind of transfer was too dangerous. Thereafter the people were placed on a launch which was sent off to the shore along the connecting rope under the command of the Midshipman Seleny. The boat was stopped sufficiently far from the shore so that it did not touch the sea bed when the waves went out. Then the disembarkation of people started. An under-officer, a very good swimmer who was the first to arrive on shore, was torn away from the rope by the waves and carried past the launch a few times. It was only when his strength was already

⁵⁹ On 25 September 1868 a Russian frigate "Alexander Nevsky", under the command of Captain II Rank Oskar Krämer and with a crew of 730 men was stranded during their return journey from Plymouth in a heavy north-north-west storm in the North Sea on the west coast of Jutland, near the village of Harbre. On board the ship were also Grandduke Alexei Alexandrovich and his tutor Nikolai Baron Schilling. The frigate was later recovered as a wreck.

threatening to fail him that he could, with great difficulty, be rescued. After this failed attempt, Seleny allowed no-one to go across to the shore without a thin rope wrapped around the chest, the one end secured to the land and the other on the launch. The man concerned then jumped into the water and could be drawn to the shore with the rope. The sling was subsequently taken back to the barge and this manoeuvre continued until all but the rowers were located in the dry. When this operation was over, the launch was brought back to the ship. In this way the whole crew (about 600 men) could be transferred safely. Some minor scratches on faces and hands were probably caused by small stones with which people may have come into contact during their 25 fathom long underwater hike. Fortunately, the soil was sandy.

The remaining people on the ship, however, pumped constantly and carried the baggage of the officers and crew on the deck in the hope that a wave would throw some objects on land. In order not to hinder the rescue work, the crew were only allowed to take small items with them. Each time the barge returned to the ship, a new department was called to transfer, their identities were confirmed, and then they were sent away under the command of an officer. I had the task to ensure, on the gun deck, that no one without authorisation joined the transfers through the gun-ports, and I can testify that there was not a single attempt to seek safety out of turn.

In the afternoon, when already more than half of the crew was ashore, the Admiral ordered three seriously ill, a priest with the holy sacraments, the paymaster with the money chest and the senior helmsman with the chronometer and the log, to be brought ashore on a boat. On the shore stood our team and a group of Japanese on a rope whose other end was attached to the bow of the cutter, and when the biggest wave approached the frigate, the Admiral gave the sign by waving a cloth for the cutter to make a run at the shore. Everything ran smoothly, only one patient got splashed and one chronometer fell and was damaged.

At 6 clock in the evening the Captain boarded the barge with the last shift. At the same time a cutter left the ship with the Admiral on board and with me at the helm. Both Putjatin and Lessowski left the frigate only when not a soul more was left on her. At first the Admiral wished that at the last moment I should cut the anchor chains, but he withdrew that later and let the "Diana" remain anchored. A rope had also been passed ashore from the Admiral's cutter, and people were waiting for the signal to pull the boat to shore. But, since the frigate obscured the view of the approaching waves, this could not be signalled as promptly as the first time. As we approached the shore, I noticed a huge wave behind us. However, it was already too late for us to avoid running ashore at full speed. The cutter buried itself with its bow in the sand and stood almost vertically, so that we all fell into the water. Fortunately, roped people rushed from the shore to meet us and pulled the boat to dry land before the retreating wave had pulled us back into the sea.

The earlier shifts who had come ashore had already made a fire and dried their clothes, and some had even built tents out of branches. Under cover of a bush sat three under-officers who drank tea from a copper kettle that someone had brought. One of the sailors stood up and offered me tea from the lid of the kettle and added sugar, in a scrap of paper, that from contact with the sea had turned to a kind of sweet and savoury syrup. Officers, wet to the skin and hungry, settled in a half-destroyed house left over after a fire broke out during the earthquake. While I was getting stuck into a somewhere discovered portion of cold rice, my batman came with a shining face and handed me my uniform with shako⁶⁰ and feather plume. Internally, I regretted not having got something better from my laundry, but I could not but praise the faithful servant that he, rather than thinking of his own possessions, had saved those things of his master which to him appeared valuable. My comrades described to me how he had come through the water with the shako, with buttoned-on chain scales, on his head and with the uniform under his arm. During the night some of us including myself, whose clothes were not yet dried, were suffering so badly from the cold that we could not sleep⁶¹. In the middle of the night, the Japanese sent us some padded kimonos with large bulky sleeves. There were only a few, and the demand was great, so that they ran out immediately. I can still not forget how I envied Pushkin, who, dressed in the skirts of such a kimono, his head stuck in a sleeve, and the feet in the other, lay and mouthed his indignation over this stupid Japanese invention with eloquent expression. Although Kowalewski, lying next to me, had lent me half of his now dry coat, I could not sleep from the cold and finally got up to go outside to warm by the fire. There I met the young junker Kornilow, who was holding in his hand a duck brought with him from the frigate which he wanted to stick with the bill forward into the fire. Thanks to my intervention, the unfortunate animal escaped with a few singed feathers. Nothing else to satisfy his hunger had occurred to the young man, who otherwise did not distinguish himself by great intellectual gifts.

No sooner had it begun to dawn than we all gathered on the shore to look in the direction in which the “Diana” lay. Basically, we doubted that she could still remain afloat with so many leaks, especially since the water level, when we had still been on board, had increased sharply during the final hours and no pumping had since taken place. To our general delight, however, the hull became increasingly apparent as the darkness decreased. When it was quite light, we saw that the frigate was sunk to about the line of the intermediate deck portholes. It is likely that the deck acted as a raft and thus reinforced the buoyancy of the vessel which, once the artillery was removed, had become much lighter. In addition, the empty fresh water tanks, their covers tightly closed, may well also have helped

⁶⁰ Shako: military headgear, still at that time worn by officers in the Russian Navy. A peaked cap with a tall crown, a feathered plume and a chin strap of chain scales, which buttoned on to the cap.

⁶¹ J.A. Goncharov, cited above, reports that during these operations, a temperature of -4° prevailed.

keep the ship afloat. Despite the smooth water surface and even though the surf had subsided significantly, the attempt to put a cutter into the water failed. In contrast, Japanese flat-bottomed boats had already reached the frigate. During the day objects were taken on them to the shore. The number of these boats was limited, and you could not hurry them strongly, so the work went forward only slowly. Our barge, on which the volunteers had spent the night, made a few trips along the connecting rope. It could not make a landing on the beach, so the crew and articles were dragged to dry land through the water with the aid of ropes as on the night before. I too went on board the ship and found conditions there appalling. On deck all sorts of objects, smashed glasses, bottles, etc., were scattered around, and you could see that they had been left behind by the crew anywhere where they had found a route to escape. Between decks, and consequently in the officer's mess, the water level was higher than to the waist. The people gathered together wet things from all over, they bundled books, clothes, etc., and took them to the shore, but before they had reached it, they were again drenched by the surf. I went back to shore on the barge and escaped without having had a bath.

In the evening a high official appeared (Tacnowski described him as treasurer of the province of Izu), who had been sent by the Duke of this province. He brought us food, copper kettles and various other items to cover the immediate requirements. He also offered us his further assistance, in a very sympathetic manner. At the request of the Admiral, he immediately sent a command to the neighbouring villages to gather all the fishing boats in the neighbourhood at the frigate the next morning. Thanks to this arrangement, close to a hundred boats of various sizes were assembled at Mishima on 7 January. The weather was beautiful and the sea smooth as glass, only immediately on the shore had the surf not quite yet come to rest. The Admiral hoped under such favourable circumstances, and with the help of the Japanese boats, to manoeuvre the frigate through the Suruga Bay to the Bay of Heda. If we managed to beach our beloved "Diana" in this protected bay, pump it out and repair the leaks, we hoped to save the ship. The boats were formed up in long lines ahead of the bow of the vessel and tow ropes were attached.

In order not to load the frigate needlessly by the weight of three anchors and the people required to hoist them, we let the anchor cables drop to the bed of the sea, after they had been attached to reliable buoys. To carry out this task, A. Moshaiski and I, with a number of sailors, were ordered to the ship where both the Admiral and the Captain would be. The boats then drew the frigate slowly from the shore. On the orders of the Admiral all now left the ship. He was the last to disembark. The majority of the officers and almost all the crew were left on the shore. We took our positions in two boats: in one were the Admiral and the Captain and several officers, including me, and in the other Moshaiski with 25 sailors. Up until noon everything went well: we saw with satisfaction that the coast was ever becoming more distant and hoped to be able to achieve the 15 to

25 sea miles to Heda safely. The Admiral wanted to board the frigate again; on this occasion, we rescued a few things left behind, including a larger number of Pallasch⁶² and pistols. After half an hour Putjatin ordered all to return to the boat, and was again the last to leave the ship. In that moment I felt such a craving, once again to be on board the “Diana” that I asked the Admiral for permission to take the ship’s bell. Yefim Vasilyevich gave his approval only reluctantly and told me to hurry. I took a sailor with me, climbed the ship’s ladder, and after a few minutes, the bell was lowered into the boat. As we left the ship, I let the sailor go first, then pushed the boat off at once. In this way I was lucky enough to have been the last on our dear “Diana”, which soon afterwards sank forever in the depths of the ocean.

Immediately after we had left the ship, the Japanese suddenly turned their uniform chuckle (while rowing they breathed the air with an even beat, which produced a strange sound) into a desperate cry. At the same moment they severed the tow from their boats and set their sails. At first we believed that the frigate was sinking, but then we saw that its position in the water had not changed, and demanded an explanation of the incident from the interpreter. In the general confusion and noise of the Japanese he was able to obtain no information. Assuming that the interpreter had not understood him correctly, the Admiral finally lost patience and repeated his question, in the excitement throwing in indiscriminately mixed chunks of English, Dutch and Spanish. Finally the phlegmatic Tacnowski realised what it was, and told us that a small white cloud which had appeared above the summit of Mount Fuji, announced the approach of a storm. He had hardly finished speaking, when a gust of wind rose, which immediately created such waves that it appeared unthinkable to return to the windward bank, in other words to Mishima. All the boats hastened therefore to seek refuge in the Bay of Inora that lay at the head of Suruga Bay. We followed them, leaving the poor “Diana” to her fate. We reached Inora after several hours, a very unpleasant ride on a flat boat. Before we travelled into the bay, we watched as in the distance the mizzen mast and the main yards of the frigate turned over and then the “Diana” lay down on its side and sank. An unspeakable grief came over all of us; we had the feeling of having lost a dear, loved creature. The bond that linked us with our old friend, which had brought us through so many storms and bad weather had, because of the tsunami, become even more strong than before. Day and night our thoughts were devoted to healing the wounds and wiping away the traces left by this terrible disaster. Just yesterday we had worried about her, and today, as the rescue appeared to be so close, all our hopes were unexpectedly and completely dashed. In a foreign country which before now had let no Europeans in at all, everything that connected us with our homeland was now lost, and while the war lasted there was just no chance to return home.

⁶² Pallasch: heavy sword.

The toppled mizzen confirmed my opinion that the ship had been held above water by the buoyancy of the deck. The deck-head of the lower between deck, on which the mizzen mast rested, could probably not carry the whole weight of the frigate and was forced upwards, and the mizzen mast was then, of course, upset. (The main mast, the foremast and the spars were carried by the keelson, the main yards probably broken and torn down by the falling mizzen mast.)

Japanese hospitality

The small town of Inora would certainly have appealed to us at any other time because of its picturesque location, surrounded by green hills on the small enclosed bay; now we had no feeling for its natural beauty. We settled down in a Japanese temple, silently ate supper and then in silence lay down to sleep – but the sleep eluded us for a long time. During the night the interpreters reported that a delegation, just arrived from Jeddo, wished to be presented to the Admiral. He declared himself ready to receive it, and several high-ranking officials appeared with many bows and greetings. They explained that they had been sent by the government to give us their condolences for the accident and to be helpful to us in settling in Heda. The Admiral accepted the offer with thanks, but again there was another unexpected complication: Yefim Vasilyevich expressed his intention to go on foot the next morning along the coast to Mishima, where our crew had been left. Our friends became anxious and demanded that he should travel with his men by water to Heda; they also promised to move the crew and all the salvaged things there from Mishima (Inora lay about half way along the coast between Heda and Mishima.) The Admiral was obviously not going to agree to this. During the night, the interpreter said several times on behalf of the delegates that they persisted in their demands just so as not to cause the indignation of their strict superiors by offering too great a concession to the Europeans. The next morning, despite all the objections, we assembled 25 of our sailors with drawn Pallasches and went on foot to Mishima. The delegates recognised that their protests had failed and joined in our train, which was headed and followed by Japanese soldiers. Although our relationship with the Japanese may from the outside appear somewhat hostile, our relations were entirely peaceful and later even friendly. On the way a snack of oranges, tea and sweets was prepared in some places for us. Only then we realized why our good companions had insisted so energetically on us to going to Heda by water. We were going a long way along the road leading from Jeddo to Miakko⁶³, and the Japanese feared, as already mentioned, the presence of foreigners in their big cities. After a march of 30 verst we arrived in Mishima before nightfall. During the two days of our absence the crew had sorted and dried all their rescued items. I found a large part of my laundry and wardrobe, and thus came into such an abundance that I was able to give some of it to less fortunate comrades. My wet books were laid out in rows to dry, but I found only incoherent leaves of different volumes. I particularly regret the loss of the narrative of Admiral Adam Johann v.

⁶³ Miakko: in Osaka, then the residence of the Emperor of Japan.

Krusenstern, that he had given me with his handwritten dedication on the title page⁶⁴.

The officers, meanwhile, were able to set up a sort of officers' mess. The Japanese had been busy not only putting our semi-derelict shed back in order, but also finishing the construction of a barracks for the crew. The walls were made of split bamboo and only the thatched roof was not yet finished. Early the following morning the indefatigable Admiral had already had built, in front of the house, a desk made from an old door resting on a barrel. There he sat and worked on the design drawings for a small vessel that he wanted to build in order, he hoped, to carry news about our accident to Russia. Work had been divided among the officers: one had to do calculations, another had to look at the wet books for various data, etc. However, the activity of the Admiral was not limited to this: he still had time besides to negotiate with Japanese officials, who tried to accommodate him in every way. Hardly anywhere in the civilized Europe where we would have been found after a shipwreck, would such substantial hospitality be found, as was the case here. As long as we were still strong, the Japanese had shown us a certain degree of mistrust, but now, after we had been overtaken by misfortune and were in complete dependence upon them, they saw in us only poor, pitiful people who needed help. I must admit that our relations were sometimes strained. This was due solely to the rules of the higher authorities, who for ages treated all foreigners with a deep-rooted suspicion. The poor officials found themselves in a difficult situation: the rules were strict and clear, but forbade them to perform their innate politeness. They made a great fuss, and assured us repeatedly that they had to act against their own will in order to follow the instructions of their superiors. Finally, it became quite different: we, the unfortunate, the helpless, did what we wanted, and they, the masters of all we used, accommodated themselves to this without serious resistance. That certainly did not happen from anxiety, and pity alone cannot explain it, though the one unquestionably principal reason for their compliance may well have been to avoid taking things to the extreme. However, it also seems to me that the Japanese felt the superiority of our education. They realised that we, despite complete dependence on the Admiral, knew how to work independently and that our minds and our spirits were more elevated than theirs, and felt – perhaps unwittingly – drawn to such a world.

Since the violent surf prevented a journey on the water, the whole crew made the way on foot to Heda on 11 January. The Admiral set off first with half the officers and half the crew, followed by a Japanese military detachment, officials and countless bearers. The rest, including myself, followed the next morning under the leadership of the Captain. Again a meal had been prepared in some places we already knew on the way. In the evening we arrived in Inora, and

⁶⁴ Admiral Adam Johann von Krusenstern (1770-1846) completed the first world circumnavigation by a Russian, 1803-1806.

stayed at the temple there. The Admiral set off in the morning for Heda from Inora and we followed early the next day. The path led along a mountainous shore, and the crew, still tired from the previous day and not accustomed to lengthy walks, spread out over a long distance. Even before we reached Heda, we met the Admiral, who had come back from there to meet us. In Heda a big temple with all its outbuildings was prepared to house the Admiral and the officers. The officers' mess was in a temple where the idols were turned with their faces to the wall, probably to avoid confusion to them by the sight of Christians in their sanctuary. Beside the temple a few houses had been provided for the crew, and opposite, on the other side of the road, a barracks was built for them. We were told that the government considered us as their guests and that they hoped that during the entire period of our stay we would live in the country at their expense. Naturally the Admiral could not agree to this, and a long negotiation began. Finally, they agreed to the Admiral's proposal that we should pay for all we needed to live, however with the condition, laid down by Jeddo, that this reckoning should commence only from the time of our arrival in force in Heda. The emperor asked us to consider as his personal gift all we had received up to then. This the Admiral gratefully accepted.

In Heda, Admiral Putjatin applied himself to allocating to all officers their duties in the proposed construction of a small schooner. This work was interrupted by a message from Possjet in Shimoda saying that a steam warship of the United States of America had arrived. We also learned from him that the English and the French fleet had been beaten back so successfully in an attack on Petropavlovsk/Kamchatka that they had retreated back to San Francisco to repair their damage. On learning of this, the Admiral set out on foot for Shimoda on 17 January with Petschurow and Kolokolzew. Kolokolzew came back to Heda close to noon the following day, with orders to send an armed barge and a cutter to Shimoda. The admiral had in fact learned, on the road, that a large French whaling boat had arrived there and he wanted to take possession of it so as to return on the ship to Russia. The Captain then addressed our whole ship's company and asked for volunteers for this enterprise. All, without exception, were of course enthusiastically willing to participate, so that Stepan Stepanovich Lessowski was forced to select for himself the necessary officers and men. He indicated that he would himself be with Jelkin (senior Navigation Officer) on the barge, while Kolokolzew, Seleny and I were ordered to follow him on the cutter. The men were equipped with weapons rescued from the frigate, that is, with bayonets, axes and pallasches. We left the rifles and pistols behind as we only had a few cartridges which had also suffered from the wet. In feverish haste some repairs were made to the vessels, and by 4 o'clock in the afternoon we stood out to sea from Heda. With two men at each oar and half-hour reliefs we advanced rapidly along the coast. We all knew that we could only succeed with a surprise night attack and that it would be easy for the well-armed whaling boat with a full crew to fight back if we had not already surprised them before the onset of dawn.

Unluckily we lost about half an hour because, in the dark, we accidentally found ourselves in the wrong bay. Only around 5 o'clock in the morning did we reach the familiar bay of Shimoda and peered with the greatest attention into the dark for the whaling boat. We moved forward without a sound. The rowlocks⁶⁵ had been wrapped in cloth to ensure that any noise from the oars was prevented, so that we almost slid across the water. Finally we saw a ship. We were on the verge of attacking from two sides when we discovered to our bitter disappointment that it was a Japanese junk. But another dark hull had already appeared in the distance. As we approached it, we were hailed by a sentry in the English language and we found ourselves next to an American steam warship. The now broken down let us see that no whaling boat was anchored in the bay. On land, we learned that it had put to sea the night before. Apparently the Americans had accidentally learned something of our intentions and had advised the French to disappear, in order not to allow their presence to reflect a violation of neutrality in Japanese waters. But we had already been dreaming of returning home, on board the "Napoleon III" (as the three-master was named) and perhaps even to capture some commercial ships.

We met the Admiral, Possjet and the other officers at a temple in the village of Kakisaki. Here we learned from the newspapers about the unfortunate outcome of the battle of the Alma⁶⁶ and the siege of Sevastopol from the south as well as details about the attack on Petropavlovsk. The officers of the American steamer "Powhatan" visited us ashore and asked us to the midday meal. The Admiral declined, however the Captain and the other officers went to the ship – each in whatever clothing was available. Only Jelkin, who spoke no foreign languages, remained behind. It took a while before we went to sit at the table. While we were waiting, the cabin door suddenly opened, and our friend Jelkin appeared in a blue American- looking uniform. Our gracious hosts had noticed his absence, and on the assumption that he was embarrassed to appear in any worn garments, they had sent him an American coat. Since Jelkin spoke no English he had not been able to resist, so he was semi-compulsorily forced to put on the strange uniform and brought to the ship. An officer who spoke some French sought eagerly to amuse him during the meal. Jelkin, however, understood only disconnected fragments of this language and therefore remained silent. When he finally realised that his neighbour at the table was talking about the earthquake and the sinking of the "Diana", he cried pathetically: "Oui, occasion très terrible". These were the only words he had produced during the whole meal, which henceforth earned for him the nickname "Occasion très terrible". He was also known as

⁶⁵ Rowlock: a holder attached to the gunwale of a boat that holds the oar in place and acts as the fulcrum for rowing.

⁶⁶ Alma: River in southwest Crimea. The French and English had landed in the Crimea in early September, where the war was decided in several military battles. By their victory in the Battle of Alma on 8 September 1854, the French-British troops freed their way to Sevastopol.

“L’article du club”, after he had once so translated the term “club member” as in Russian, the terms “member” and “articles” are identified with the same word.

The kindness of the Americans was not limited to this invitation. They also provided us with all sorts of necessary things, and the captain, McCluney, even offered to take the whole crew to Shanghai. Yefim Vasilyevich, however, declined with thanks, and we limited ourselves to sending our correspondence with the ship.

On 26 January 1855⁶⁷ Putjatin finally concluded the trade agreement and it was signed in Shimoda. His chief assistant, also in setting out the Dutch text, was K.N. Possjet. After everything was over, the Admiral returned to Heda, taking me with him. We found the work on the construction of the schooner in a very far-advanced stage, even though not only had we had to procure all the necessary material, but also all tools for the workshops had to be provided from our own efforts. Our worthy men built themselves a lathe, forged tools, boiled tar, wound rope out of Japanese hemp, manufactured housings for sheaves in blocks and also various other accessories to equip the boat. Of course there were frequently many serious difficulties, but with energy these were all overcome. For each trade, an officer was detailed to receive his instructions from the Admiral himself. As well as this, the Japanese allocated two employees and some master craftsmen, for each subject area, who were soon valued for their ingenuity and accuracy. With our wide range of responsibilities, we found no time for boredom. In the short periods of free time we had, we took walks in the picturesque surroundings of Heda, although the Japanese had erected wooden gates at all exits of the city, with guards in front, who had strict orders not to let us outside the city limits. We paid no attention to this, and either opened the gates by force or went around them. Then the guards received the order, “To see through the fingers” in relation to our walks, which of course then became a comedy. As we approached, the guards opened the doors themselves and then stood with their backs to us as if they had not noticed us.

Subterranean shocks at greater or lesser strength were repeated in Heda quite often. They were particularly disturbing at night. We frequently then had to jump outside scantily clad, as the temple walls began to sway. Sometimes there were very funny scenes. Jelkin, who particularly feared the earthquakes, practised every night, with half-closed eyes, finding the door handle in the dark so as to be able to get into the open as quickly as possible in case of emergency. A crowd of spectators usually gathered, who laughed until they dropped as the portly Jelkin carried out his comic body movements. One night I woke up only when the earthquake was already over, and had just decided not to get up, when suddenly a terrible crash rang out from the next room. We all believed that the temple had collapsed, and hurried out into the yard. Our servants came running with lanterns, and there we found the poor Jelkin, wildly thrashing about on the outer gallery

⁶⁷ See notes 9 and 37.

amidst a pile of smashed window frames. Dr. Krolewecki, who shared the room together with Jelkin, had opened the door (without any prior practice) and had already left the room. Jelkin, not knowing this, grabbed the handle and tried to push the door to the side (the Japanese had only sliding doors). Since the already open door did not yield, he assumed in his excitement that the walls had already collapsed, and had thrown himself through the window frame, covered with paper, upon which he had fallen to the earth. The poor Jelkin was later often teased with the experience, but he was frequently the one to laugh most about it.

In March, the American trading schooner “Caroline Foote” arrived in Shimoda with various goods of really questionable quality. In San Francisco, the Americans had bought all sorts of junk, which was now to be sold at high prices in Japan. From the newspapers, which the ship had brought, we learned of the unfavourable outcome of the battle of Inkermann⁶⁸. The Admiral chartered this schooner to send a part of the crew to Petropavlovsk. The ship was cleared and the cargo stored in a temple in Kakisaki. Then the schooner sailed for Heda, where it was to be loaded with Japanese rice, our rescued weapons and all that could be useful in the defence of Petropavlovsk. On 30 March, S.S. Lessowski with eight officers and 150 men of our crew stood out to sea on the “Caroline Foote”. Not without envy, we watched the receding boat with our eyes, and wondered when our hour would come.

A few days later I was awakened in the night and called to the Admiral, who gave me the order to leave at once for Shimoda to charter for us a large American clipper⁶⁹ that had arrived there. When I asked under what conditions this had to happen, he just said that I should do my best to make it as affordable as possible for us. The admiral wanted me to use a Japanese boat. Urgency was necessary in order to ensure that the Americans did not depart from Shimoda before my arrival. But the Japanese, torn from their sleep, tried to postpone the departure as far as possible until the morning and stretched out the provisioning of the boat. In order to avoid unnecessary loss of time, I set out on foot on the road. Even when I, paper lantern in hand, had already marched far up the mountain paths, the fussy Japanese still debated whether or not they should give me a boat.

The road was known to me, and in the day I would have probably travelled it without difficulty, but in the dark the lantern lit no more than two steps of the path ahead, it was impossible to orient myself, and I soon found I found myself in an area totally unknown to me. Eventually the footpath led me to a village where I awoke the residents in the first proper building. They were all women who, at the sight of a man in an unfamiliar costume, ran away screaming. For this I was attacked by dogs, which I was able to resist only with difficulty. I did not want to wait for the dawn in the village for fear that by this waste of time I might miss the

⁶⁸ In the Battle of Inkermann, on 5 November 1854 near the Bay of Sevastopol, the French and British troops won.

⁶⁹ Clipper: Fast sailing ship (to mid-19th century).

opportunity to return to Russia. So I knocked on the door of another house. There an old man opened the door. I told him, in broken Japanese, that I sought the way to Shimoda. The old man gestured me to go away, but when he realised that I was not going to go away, he woke a little boy and asked him to lead me to the track. The half-asleep child took me to a nearby mountain behind the village, pointed to a footpath and ran off like wildfire. At each fork in the road that followed I found myself in doubt as to which direction I should take. It was so dark, that I did not notice that my footpath had led me to the edge of a precipice. Fortunately, as I tumbled down I was able to grasp the root of a shrub, but I lost the lantern and my stick. There was now no other choice than to wait at the edge of the abyss for about an hour until the dawn. Later I got to the beach and there persuaded a fisherman to take me in his boat to Matzuzaki. During the trip I was able to rest a little and then went straight across the peninsula on foot on to Shimoda. When I arrived, I had been travelling for 14 hours, of which 12 hours were at an accelerated pace, and had travelled throughout more than 50 verst through a mountainous landscape. During the march I had had running through my mind how best to fulfil my task, and decided to persuade the American captain to go with his clipper to Heda, so that the Admiral could negotiate directly with him. The captain of the “Young America”, Mr. Babcock, was not keen on this at first, saying he had no maps of these waters. Finally he agreed, providing I would be willing to guide the clipper. We took the sailors, who we had left behind in Shimoda to monitor incoming ships, on board and weighed anchor. Unfortunately, there was no wind, so that we did not arrive in Heda until close to noon. Negotiations on the lease commenced immediately. It turned out that the clever Yankee, having heard from the officers of the “Powhatan” in Shanghai of our disaster, had come immediately to the conclusion that much money could be made here. He was anxious, therefore, to get to Shimoda as soon as possible. For our transport to Kamchatka, he demanded 50,000 dollars. Putjatin offered him about 18,000. Step by step, reducing by 5,000 dollars each time, the captain was driven down gradually to 30,000 dollars, but the Admiral remained adamant. It ended with the Yankee going back out to sea on his clipper while we continued with increased zeal on the ongoing construction of the schooner. After three or four days we saw a ship on the water and immediately recognised the “Young America” from its sails. We assumed rightly that the captain had thought it over and was now ready to take us to Kamchatka for the offered price. Semenov was then sent on foot to Shimoda to recall Kowalewski and two sailors who, following the departure of the American, had again been sent there for observation duties. Babcock visited the Admiral and told him that he had been intercepted on the high seas by the French corvette “Constantine”, which had returned to China after he had told the people that we were no longer in Japan. He was now completely convinced that an encounter with Allied armed forces on the way to Kamchatka was no longer to be feared and, therefore, was prepared to carry out our transportation for 15,000 dollars. The drawing up of a contract and hasty preparations to leave began immediately. Some of us handed over the almost

completed schooner and its fitting out to the Japanese and others purchased supplies and loaded them on to the clipper. When the whole contract was properly drawn up, Babcock suddenly asked to change some points. Everything had to be rewritten, and as fast this work was completed, the Americans in turn raised new demands. I was not present at the negotiations, but I know that the Admiral was very angry about this behaviour. One evening, at last, the contract was signed. We hoped to set sail at night in order to be put ashore on the western shore of Kamchatka near Bolscherezk, from where we intended to go along the coast to Petropavlovsk-Kamchatski. From the newspapers we knew that the English and French had assembled a whole armada for a second attack on Petropavlovsk-Kamchatski, and there was therefore the danger of our being captured underway by enemy cruisers. The rabble of all sorts – Negroes, Chinese, German, etc. – making up the clipper crew had, moreover, told our officers that they actually met the French corvette “Constantine” on the high seas and, after a stay on board the French corvette by their captain Babcock, they sailed back in company to the Japanese coast. This information was confirmed by a message from Shimoda that the “Constantine” had arrived. The Admiral did not lay too much weight on this, because he expected to go to sea at night and, in the dark, was safe from interference by the enemy. He ordered the crew and all items to be hurriedly put on board. If Kowalewski, Semenov and the two sailors did not return in time for our departure they would, in the prevailing circumstances, have to remain in Japan. A new incident, however, changed the situation. The crew of the clipper mutinied and ran ashore.

It would certainly have been possible to reach Kamchatka with our own crew, but the clipper also needed a crew for the return trip. While the Japanese, on the initiative of the Admiral, were searching for the runaways, we lost no time and the loading continued. Then a cheering incident arose with a Japanese monk, who wanted to travel with us to Russia. To learn Japanese, Goschkewitsch had established relations with this man, who only visited us secretly at night, because every Japanese man who was caught dealing with Europeans was, by an old law, threatened with the death penalty. One night the monk came again to Goschkewitsch, after a long absence, with the request to hide him as soon as possible because he had been arrested for his contact with us, but had escaped from custody. Without thinking much, the man was put in a sailor’s shirt, he was fitted with a wig made of tarred hemp, and he was kept hidden from his countrymen. Then the authorities apparently learned something about this shelter. They asked for permission to visit our building so that they could carry out allegedly necessary repairs. They went all over the place and looked in every corner, while our monk, surrounded by a group of sailors, was taken from one room to another. We were satisfied that the affair had been forgotten after this fruitless search and that it would not be difficult to smuggle the man onto the clipper in the midst of a group of sailors. It had not. As part of our crew was already on the ship, we soon learned that the Japanese had stationed at the lighted

pier a guard who shone a lantern in the face of every sailor. It was clear that the monk would be found out. His slanting Japanese eyes and yellow complexion would certainly betray him immediately, despite sailor shirt and wig. The men had to stow the poor fellow in a box and try to carry him on board in this way. When loading from the boat to the clipper, the two ends of the box had been confused with each other in the rush, so that the man had his legs pointing upwards. He was been let down into the hold in the same position and only there was the mistake discovered. Late in the evening Kowalewski, Semenov and the sailors from Shimoda joined us. They reported that the French corvette had put to sea with an unknown aim. We stayed on the clipper, but had to postpone the departure until the next day because the Japanese had still not brought back all the decamped American sailors. In the morning, when men had already been sent to weigh anchor, Babcock came to Yefim Vasilyevich with the torn contract in hand and announced that he would not take us to sea, because not only his crew, which had once again been brought back to strength, but also all other employees refused to obey. This informal approach drove Putjatin to anger. He ordered us all, once again, to go back on land and in the pouring rain we found ourselves again that evening in our old quarters. The monk was this time brought over more carefully, with his head up. The Yankee came forward once again with the suggestion to set up a new contract because he had allegedly made his subordinates compliant by a larger payment. Yefim Vasilyevich told him with contempt that he would have nothing more to do with him. Cursing and swearing, the American lifted his anchor, and once again we put our hopes fully on the schooner.

On 13 April, the “Heda” was launched. This was associated with certain ceremonies, we had invitations sent to all the officials and some residents of the city, and after the launch, the Japanese craftsmen and our sailors, who had worked together so harmoniously, were treated to a lunch. The officers, together with the officials, ate with the Admiral. On the same day, the rigging of the schooner was commenced, and on 26 April the Admiral sailed on it to Petropavlovsk. He was accompanied by his staff, consisting of: Possjet, the artillery colonel Lossev, the Midshipmen Petschurov and Kolokolzev, the helmsman-officer Semenov, the junkers Lazarev and Kornilov and 50 enlisted men.

After the departure of the “Heda” the command of all who stayed behind in Japan passed to the senior officer, Leutnant zur See Mussin Pushkin. All regular activities had stopped, the few books that had been rescued were read several times, and we suffered not only from homesickness, but also boredom. We could not make contact with the Japanese, because of their strict rules, and the only activity open to us was to make trips. Rowing on our boats, we made sketch maps of the surrounding bays, which did not please the Japanese, particularly if the excursions went into the territory of a neighbouring duke, who then complained every time to the government about the penetration action and caused us to get involved in a long correspondence with the officials. The explanation was usually written in the sense that, with the approval of the governor, Nàkamora Taméa, we

were out at the sea to keep on the lookout for ships that could perhaps be sent from Russia to take us home and that a strong wind had forced us to seek temporary protection in that bay. We had the best of relationships with the old Nàkamora and his assistant Uékawa. For lesser misunderstandings, the interpreter Tacnowski usually came to us first and asked us to explain the excursion in the sense described, as otherwise it would be difficult for his superior to justify himself. Then the old Nàkamora himself came with a suite of officials and, with a deliberately sorrowful mien, put to me and to Puschkin the pre-arranged questions that were answered in the desired manner. The officials recorded this repeatedly presented comedy every time, word for word, in a log. After the end of the conversations the kindly old man went back home with a satisfied smile.

On leaving, the Admiral had given Nàkamora a sextant⁷⁰. Now he appeared almost daily with me to learn how to find the latitude of a place with this instrument. I could not speak Japanese and had to give all my explanations through the interpreter, and then in Dutch, a language I had first learned in Japan. The main difficulty, however, was that Tacnowski was a rather uneducated man who knew little about mathematics and therefore the simplest things were often passed on incorrectly. In these circumstances the teaching course progressed very slowly. However, thanks to his unparalleled diligence, the old man learned to read our numbers and to seek out the necessary data in the tables. Even before our departure from Japan, he could already determine the latitude by the mid-day position of the sun, and we could also have proceeded to determine the longitude, if the considerably more difficult mathematical calculations associated with this had not put insurmountable barriers in the way. The wise Nàkamora had a marked talent for mathematics, but in his youth he had been taught to use a rather peculiar method. For example, he knew by heart the squares of all numbers from 1 to 100 and, if I am not mistaken, also the cubes of the numbers to 50. Of astronomy, he had only a very limited grasp, but well understood what I lectured to him about the position of the earth relative to the sun and the moon. In a previous year, in Nagasaki, he had been given a clock by Admiral Putjatin. He had observed that the Japanese daylight hours in summer were significantly longer than the “Russian Hours” on his clock, and conversely, that in winter the “Russian Hours” were longer than the Japanese. Here it should be noted that the Japanese divided the period between sunrise and sunset into six hours and therefore that their hours were longer in summer than in winter.

In mid May, the American schooner “Caroline Foote” returned from Kamchatka. It brought us letters from our companions and the information that by order of the high command Petropavlovsk had been cleared of all of our ships. Taking with them the guns and all the crown property, they removed to the Amur estuary. In Petropavlovsk our comrades had found only one trading brig, which

⁷⁰ Sextant: Navigational instrument for the freehand measurement of angles (star heights) to determine time and place.

had been chartered by an agent of the Russian government in San Francisco and had then brought powder, bullets and food for our ships. Lessowski and his companions followed our squadron to the Amur estuary on board this vessel. In their letters our comrades told of the glorious battle of Petropavlovsk and the heroic death of Prince Maksutov, who had had an arm blown off by a shot. These letters were read again and again, and were thus a big event in our monotonous life. The general joyous mood was soon clouded by the refusal of the American to take us to the Amur estuary. In the contract with the Admiral, the captain of the “Caroline Foote” had undertaken to transport our entire crew in three trips to Petropavlovsk; now he flatly refused to meet that obligation, took his unsold goods back on board and sailed to San Francisco. We all hung our heads and resigned ourselves to a further wait. Soon after the departure of the Americans, we learned from the Japanese side that a squadron of seventeen pennants was spotted going north, west of Nippon. It had obviously been enemy ships. (*Note by translator: The term used in the German translation is wimpel, and refers to the pennants flown by warships. It is translated to pennant wherever found in this narrative.*)

On 25 June, the birthday of the Emperor Nikolai Pavlovich⁷¹, we prepared ourselves to hold a festive service. Both the officers and men made an effort to appear clean and well dressed for the occasion. As we gathered for worship, a courier arrived from Shimoda with the good news that a German trading brig had arrived and that the captain had sent us several English newspapers. We threw ourselves upon them. Even before I had unfolded the first sheet, I was overwhelmed, because of my knowledge of English, with questions: “What about Sevastopol?” – “How is it in the Baltic?”⁷² – “So, read more quickly!”. But tears came to my eyes, and I was not able to answer, because the first words I had read were: “The new young Emperor of Russia⁷³”. In the hope that this was a hoax, I could not bring myself to pass on what I read. But I soon noted with sadness that these words were constantly repeated and that the newspapers were full of speculation by the English, as to how the conditions in Russia would change under the young emperor. Outside, meanwhile, the religious service was starting, and we went there, still stunned with horror at this sad news. After the ceremony was over, we leaped back on the newspapers in which I found in fine print a report on the funeral ceremonies taken from the German press. Now we could no longer doubt that Russia had suffered a difficult loss in this already sorrowful year. An hour after the service, the crew was again gathered, and Puschkin, as senior officer, told them in a trembling voice of the death of their beloved Emperor. The sailors wept like children.

On the same day Puschkin and I went to Shimoda to negotiate with the captain Thaulow on chartering his brig for the crossing to Russia. The vessel was

⁷¹ Nikolai I (b. 1796), 1825-1855.

⁷² The British blockaded the Russian ports on the Baltic.

⁷³ Alexander II (b. 1818), 1855-1881.

chartered for 10,000 dollars, and we set to work at once. The rest of the cargo had to be unloaded to make room to accommodate our people. The Japanese gave us, in their usual accommodating manner, barrels of fresh water and provisions. After the loading was finished, we sailed on the brig for Heda, where the remaining preparations were completed over the course of a few days. The brig "Greta" had originally been equipped by a German businessman in Hong Kong to transport supplies for American whalers. After the bulk of the goods had been sold in Hakodate, the ship sailed on to Shimoda. There, the rest would be disposed of. Captain Thaulow told us that, in Hakodate, he had seen a large Anglo-French squadron, which was on its way to the Tatar Sound, ostensibly to destroy the Russian fortifications existing at the mouth of the Amur. This was also confirmed by the news from the Japanese side that the Allied fleet had left Hakodate, after messages had reached them that they would find some Russian vessels in the Bay de Castries, south of the Amur lagoon. In these circumstances, we could naturally no longer think of reaching the Amur estuary from the south. We told Thaulow that we now wanted to be taken to Ajan on the Sea of Okhotsk, which he agreed to do.

Captivity and return home

After a church service and swearing our oath to the (new) Emperor Alexander II on the morning of the 2nd July 1855, we took our leave of the Japanese officials, of whom we had most pleasant memories. We always received all that we needed without delay and then even on credit, because our remaining currency, except for a small reserve, was exhausted down to a few groschen (from lack of funds with us we had for a long time received no pay). All accounts were then completed and certified by our signatures. Then we went on board the brig. At that time Puschkin and I decided to go ashore again to our respected Nākamora – Taméa and his assistant Uékawa-Danítsero to pay a farewell visit. The old man was visibly moved by this expression of gratitude and, at the head of a whole flotilla of Japanese boats, escorted us to the exit from the bay.

On the brig, it was very cramped: a small room, in which we could stretch out to sleep, was put at the disposal of the officers but the rest of our men could not all be accommodated in the hold, so that some of them took turns to be on deck. Because of cool weather, which prevailed from the first day of our trip, this was particularly unpleasant. The wind gradually degenerated into such a storm that we barely escaped a disaster on the south coast of the island of Nippon / Hondo. With the constant rain and fog, we made way only with great caution. Once we came upon a sleeping whale, who with a single blow of his tail splashed the whole of our deck. Between the islands of Urup and Iturup we crossed the Kuril island chain against a very strong current of more than 6 knots⁷⁴ (more than double the flow of the Neva). The snow lay thick on the mountains and in the valleys, in some places right down to the shore, and that in July, on the 45th Latitude, on a level with Bordeaux and Venice! When we reached the Sea of Okhotsk, the temperature dropped even further and the fog thickened, so that we sailed completely blind.

When we passed the northern tip of Sakhalin on 20 July, the fog disappeared in a flash. We discovered to our horror that we were a very short distance from an English steam warship, that headed for us immediately and, with a shot, ordered us to stop. In order not to arouse the suspicion of the English from the excessively large crew, we locked all our sailors in the hold. Thaulow, meanwhile, hoisted the American flag. An armed sloop put away from the British ship, and all our hopes for a return to our homeland were gone in a flash. We officers were also put into the cargo hold. Thaulow told the British, who had now come on board, that he had a load of supplies for American whalers on the ship and therefore had hoisted the American flag, even though his ship was based in Bremen. This fairy tale was given little credence as a Chinese member of the crew had, through fear, already given us away. The British officer opened the

⁷⁴ 1 knot = 1 nautical mile (1,852 km) per hour, the speed of the current was thus 11.2 km/h.

cargo hold, where we had been almost suffocated through lack of air, and ordered us on deck. It is not easy to describe our deep depression, which was made no better by the anger at having been taken prisoner without any resistance. I was one of the first to climb out and tried to explain to the English lieutenant, that we were a part of the crew of the wrecked “Diana” and, as unarmed people who had not participated in any hostilities, were not, according to International Law, in the category of prisoners of war. The officer replied that this issue could be resolved only by a higher authority and, after he had noted the number of officers and enlisted men, ordered Pushkin and me to follow him to the steamer “Barracouta”. An English guard was left behind on the brig, and the guns of the warship, with guns’ crews ready, remained aimed at our tiny vessel.

On the “Barracouta” I once gain voiced my objections to the English Captain Sterling, but he could only answer me that any decision about our release did not lie within his authority and that he was obliged to take us to his Admiral at Hakodate, where he was already heading with dispatches. When we learned that a whole group of ships under the command of Commander Eliot lay in Ajan, we asked the captain to take us there, if he believed that the Commander had the authority to put us ashore. After some hesitation, Sterling expressed his regret that he had got into the situation of detaining people that had been rescued from a shipwreck, and added that, only because of this weighty factor, he was prepared to return to Ajan and seek the approval of the Commander for our release. Sterling initially wanted to keep Pushkin and me with him on his ship but finally, at our request, he allowed us to stay with our crew until we reached Ajan. The captain increased the guard on the brig and ordered his senior officer assume temporary command. We were then taken in tow by the warship. Guards were posted on both tow chains⁷⁵, the barrel of the stern gun was pointed at us and course was set to Ajan. We spent the night with sad reflections that our future did not exactly appear in a rosy light, as we entertained no doubt that the Commander would not release us, if only in order not, by such a decision, to call into question the legality of our capture. Without the prospect of prize money⁷⁶, the English would rather not have held us, since our release would not cause them any loss, while our retention as prisoners of war in these remote waters was a heavy burden. During the night we distributed the remaining Ship’s funds between ourselves in order not to let it fall into the hands of the English. Some recovered officers’ sabres were thrown overboard, and with a lot of effort we retrieved our brass cannon from where it was hidden under the provisions and also sunk that in the sea, so that this did not end as a trophy in enemy hands. In Ajan the English ships at anchor there received the “Barracouta” with music, cheers and congratulations on their captured booty.

⁷⁵ Tow chains: used to tow the ship.

⁷⁶ Prize: a confiscated enemy ship or its cargo. Prize money: reward for a prize.

Soon after our arrival, Commander Eliot ordered Pushkin and, since he spoke no English, also me to go on board the frigate "Sibyl". He received us on the quarterdeck and put us properly in the picture about all the matters about which we had spoken to Captain Sterling, and said that by English law only the Queen had the right to dismiss prisoners of war. To our reply, that we were not prisoners of war, but unarmed people who had not taken part in any war, he declared that we could not be regarded as peaceful civilians, as we were in the service of the government. We pointed out the futility of our continued arrest: "One holds an enemy in custody only for the purpose of preventing his participation in warlike acts. Would we really be in a position to cause injury to England, if you landed us somewhere on the barren shores of the Okhotsk Sea? By contrast, as prisoners we would incur only completely unnecessary expense." When we saw that all our arguments were achieving nothing, we asked the Commander at least to release the sick and weak, in the care of our ship's doctor, and had also pointed out that otherwise the whole English crew could be infected. "I would wish to release the sick to the doctor but I have no authority so to do." replied the Commander. I said: "We cannot allow the sick to die in this uninhabited area without medical attention." I was abruptly interrupted by Eliot: "I did not ask for your approval!" I responded: "You have the right of the stronger party, but you can rest assured that we will use the first available opportunity to announce this totally unjustified harsh treatment of the sick through the world press. We do not doubt for a moment that even your own people will condemn this." This argument seemed to have an effect on the Commander. He paused for a moment and then said that the inhabitants had only temporarily left Ajan and that they would certainly return at once after the departure of the English ships. When he saw that we insisted on the release of the doctor, he finally promised to put the doctor ashore as well. Our medical man, a Pole by birth, was excellent in his field but was, however, a great talker. I was worried that he might, in conversation with the English, betray that there were no defences around the Amur estuary and it was partly for this reason that I had insisted so vigorously on his release. During our discussions with Eliot, part of our crew had been brought over to the frigate "Sibyl", among them our priest, Father M... He was a good-natured old man, not at all stupid, but not very well educated. As a younger man, he had been a priest in a remote village somewhere in the province of Kursk; after the death of his wife, he then handed the congregation over to his brother-in-law and had become a monk at the Alexander Nevsky monastery from where he had been sent on the "Diana" on the circumnavigation of the world. His tall, thickset figure in shabby black robes and his long white beard gave him a patriarchal appearance, so that the English treated him with obvious respect. We asked the Commander to allow the priest to go ashore also, out of respect for his spiritual dignity, and in view of his advanced age and his weakened health. Eliot was immediately agreeable, but wanted to retain the doctor. We protested with all our means. When the conversation with the Commander was over, Pushkin and I were taken back to the "Barracouta" with part of our crew, where Captain Sterling

kindly made cabins available and asked that we should consider ourselves as his guests. Goschkewitsch was accommodated by the officers in their mess, the crew had to rely on a really narrow space between decks. Sterling confided in me in the evening that we would leave the next morning for Hakodate. Through him we also learned that the Commander, after we had left, had again changed his decision on the liberation of the physician but that he, Sterling, had managed to change his mind again. Early the next morning we watched as our patients were disembarked in sloops from the frigate of the Commander and were pleased when we found out, through a telescope, that the doctor was among the passengers. Unfortunately, however, a boat was ordered back before it reached the land. Sterling went immediately to the Commander. He knew the indecision of his superior and realised that this could only have happened because of the doctor. It turned out that he had been right. According to him, it almost came to a rift between him and Eliot. Sterling did not return to us until after the doctor had been put into the sloop for the second time and had been taken ashore without any further ado.

Besides us, the English had also taken as prisoners some Finnish sailors from a brig of the Russian-American Company. In an effort to escape the British, the brig had tried to reach the Amur estuary from the north and had run aground on one of the many sand banks. From the Finns, the English had learned that the Russian warships were in the Amur lagoon and that access to it for larger vessels was possible only from the south through the Tatar Sound. Captain Sterling was sent with this message to Hakodate to his father, Sir James Sterling, and met with us while making this passage.

Throughout the trip the British officers behaved very kindly towards us. We gained from their stories that their crew had sacked Ajan and that the Finnish sailors had unfortunately been taken at that time. According to the reports of the Finns, the inhabitants of Ajan fled hastily into the forest when the enemy approached, and guns and other items that could not be carried away were buried in the ground. The British had worked in vain together with the Finns to locate the hiding places.

It turned out that all we had heard in Heda from the Japanese corresponded completely to the facts. In Hakodate, the English and French squadron in Chinese waters had (with, if I'm not mistaken, 17 vessels) united under the command of two admirals. Soon after arriving in Hakodate, Admiral Sterling (the father of our amiable Captain) had assigned Commander Eliot with the frigate "Sibyl", a propeller-driven corvette and a brig to a reconnaissance mission in the Tatar Sound. The remaining vessels remained in Hakodate, awaiting the outcome of this expedition. Commander Eliot had, as he approached the Bay de Castries in clear weather, observed that there were three Russian warships at anchor: the frigate "Aurora", the corvette "Olewudez" and the transport "Dvina", under the command of Rear Admiral Sawoiko, had arrived here from Petropavlovsk and, for

the time being, waited until the Amur River was ice free. On board in this small squadron were many passengers with their families and also a significant amount of Crown property. On one Sunday, just as the services were being held on the ships, the approach of the enemy been detected. The alarm was immediately raised and fire was opened at the British, who in turn responded to the bombardment, but from a distance so vast that the shots did not reach their targets. After a brief and inconclusive battle the British had withdrawn. Eliot had then sent, by a brig, a request to the Admiral for reinforcements and had remained near the bay with the frigate and the screw corvette to keep our ships under observation. It must be mentioned that each of the three British ships was significantly more heavily armed than its corresponding opponent. So it would have been easily possible to attack us without reinforcements. The day after the departure of the British, Admiral Sawoiko learned that the ice blockage of the Amur was over. He then weighed anchor and arrived safely in the bay, without having seen the English while under way. Apparently they had held off a long way from shore because of the frequent fog. Meanwhile, the English brig had to contend with a headwind on its journey. So Eliot, after several days of waiting in vain for it to return, had decided to go back to de Castries. As he had noted that the Russian ships no longer lay at anchor there, he had moved into the bay and had, probably out of annoyance and with no reinforcements in sight, fired shots at a storehouse on the shore, which was quickly destroyed. After this success, some officers had tried to land. They would certainly have been captured if our Cossacks, who were in hiding behind trees on the beach, had not opened fire on them too early. An Englishman was wounded here, whereupon the sloop had pulled back to the frigate. Eliot then fired shots into the forest, and after he had damaged a large number of trees, he left the bay.

A few days later the whole Anglo-French fleet assembled outside de Castries. It now had to be established whether the Russian ships were actually in the Amur. To this end, the lighter vessels were sent forward in a northerly direction. Because of insufficient precautions, one of them, the paddle steamer "Tartar", which drew only six feet, ran aground. This steamer, which had previously run the passenger route between Hong Kong and Canton, belonged to a private company. During the war it had been chartered by Admiral Sterling for 100 pounds Sterling per day, it had received a Navy crew and hoisted the flag of war. The ship was soon refloated again, but as a result of the incident it was concluded that it was impossible in such a shallow waters to get to the Amur from the south. The "Tartar" was now ordered to Nagasaki and waited there for further instructions. Both admirals went to Hakodate, while the whole fleet under the command of Eliot went into the Sea of Okhotsk to explore the access to the Amur estuary from the north. Through this senseless consequence, we were suddenly falling unawares into our misfortune. But who could also anticipate that the allied fleet, with all its available resources – both steam and rowing vessels – was unable to find the same fairway that we had discovered a year ago and that the

“Diana” and “Pallada” had happily traversed. But God works to the good. Because the “Barracouta” met us and brought us to Ajan, it was late in delivering their message to Hakodate. They arrived there only after the admirals had left the day before, having yet to learn that our ships had in the meanwhile actually been in the Amur lagoon and that this could be reached only from the south. No trace was evident of the spirit of enterprise by which the English Navy had distinguished itself at the time of Nelson and Collingwood, but I nevertheless believe that the allied admirals, had they got this message punctually, would have gone to the mouth of the Amur, where it would have been easy for them not only to destroy our ships, but also even to force us completely out of this recently possessed river course.

In the roads of Hakodate, we found only two sailing frigates: the English “Pick” and the French “Sibylle” whose crews, on the way from Petropavlovsk, had gone ashore and had heavily plundered the Kuril Islands. Because the magnificent number of beaver furs had not been enough for them, they had fallen on the meagre supplies of the traders and left the people on these barren islands without any food.

In Hakodate Captain Sterling distributed 20 men of our sailors among the warships lying there, but he kept Pushkin and me back on the “Barracouta”. After he received word that the Admiral wanted all messages intended for him to be directed to Nagasaki, Sterling also went there. On our arrival, we found only the steamer “Tartar” in the roads ahead of us, but almost every day more warships arrived, waiting unfulfilled from 16 August to 17 September for the arrival of their admirals. The entire fleet was gathered, it only lacked the admirals who were searching in the Chinese waters for Russian ships or, as the young officers said sarcastically: “They are gone, so as not to meet the Russians.”

The Japanese did not allow the English to anchor in the inner harbour of Nagasaki, and even prohibited them to traffic with a Dutch warship which was there. There was no question of permission to go ashore. When the “Pallada” stayed there a year before, our officers, due to the energetic demands of Admiral Putjatin, had been able to move around anywhere quite freely. The British had been ordered by their admiral, however, to comply strictly with all Japanese orders. He probably sought to win the goodwill of the Japanese, but every day new bans were imposed and finally prohibited even the movement of the sloops. Consequently a planned regatta had to be abandoned. This treatment of the English filled me with great glee, and when the young officers sometimes criticised the conduct of their superiors, I poured further fuel to the fire, as I told how we were treated and how Putjatin had put up with nothing. As a reward for their exemplary obedience, the Allies were finally allowed to visit a small, uninhabited island.

Through the arrival of the other ships, the allied squadron also enlarged our Russian society. Our comrades, Mikhailov, Seleny, Goschkewitsch, Kowalewski

and Prince Urussow, all having been captured, were now also with us. We were allowed to set foot on that small island as well as the English. We tried to seclude ourselves where possible and to spend time somewhere in a quiet corner among our countrymen. Sometimes we were invited to the other ships or got to know officers who came to visit the "Barracouta". From the loquacity of the young people we soon learned some details of the expedition to Petropavlovsk, which I reproduce here as I have heard from British officers who were eyewitnesses.

In order to preserve the chronological order, I begin the description with the arrival of the "Diana" in Valparaiso in March 1854. Soon after we arrived in the roads, a French admiral arrived on the frigate "Forte" and a few days later the British frigate "President" under the flag of Admiral Price. Our captain and the French Admiral had exchanged visits with each other. Following nautical etiquette, the commander of each warship already anchored in the roads, when encountering foreign naval vessels, used to send an officer to the newly arrived ship, to welcome it in the name of his commander and to offer to make his services available. In response to this gesture the newly arrived captain would pay a visit to all the commanders, and then the other officers also made exchanges between their messes to get to know each other.

At the moment the "President" arrived, an English merchant steamer, which ran the mail with Peru and Panama, weighed its anchor, but was held back by a signal from the English admiral. S.S. Lessowski commanded me to make the usual courtesy welcome visit to the "President". I was talking there on the quarterdeck with an officer of a United States frigate, who had arrived on the ship at almost the same time as me and for the same purpose. After a few minutes, a midshipman approached us and asked the American to follow him into the cabin of the admiral, but he told me that the Admiral was too heavily involved with the handling of the mail to receive me. I boarded my sloop, and immediately pulled away. Meanwhile, the American frigate saluted the flag of the British admiral, while preparations were in hand on the "Diana" prior to doing the same thing. By cries and signs I was told to lie off a little behind the stern of the ship. I managed to get on board before the salute, however, and then reported on what had happened. Our salute remained undone. Ashore, it was seen that we had not made the usual salute to the English admiral's flag, and we were bombarded later by our friends with questions as to whether the war had already broken out.

The next morning the English Captain paid Captain Lessowski the normal return visit. Lessowski explained to him why he did not salute the day before: the officer sent by us was instructed to determine whether our salute would be answered with the same number of shots, noting the tense relations between the two governments and, after our officer had not been received, the salute was withheld. The English captain apologized for the behaviour of his admiral through lack of time, whereupon it was objected that this had not prevented him from receiving an American officer. Immediately after the return of the captain to

his ship the aide to the English admiral came to apologize in his name for the incident and with the assurance that the blame lay only on the midshipman, who had inaccurately passed on the words of his admiral and who had already been punished for that. The Englishman said that our salute would of course be reciprocated with the same number of shots, and asked, visibly embarrassed, to be lent a Russian flag, as such was not at hand because they had not expected to meet a Russian warship in the Pacific. After the exchange of salutes, Captain Lessowski paid a visit to the English frigate and soon after Admiral Price came to us. He was a kindly old gentleman whose his life so tragically came to an end a few months later at Petropavlovsk⁷⁷.

The English admiral left Valparaiso soon after. In the town the rumour spread that he had gone to intercept the mail steamer expected from Europe to get the latest news from there as quickly as possible. It was said that the French admiral would in the future monitor us according to mutual agreement (the "Forte" was equipped with 60 guns, but we had only 52). The "Forte" actually did follow us, as we left Valparaiso on the evening of 11 March 1854. In low winds, they were a little superior in speed and could therefore keep quite close to us. As a precaution, we made all preparations for action during the night and it proved, at first light the next morning, that the French had also been preparing for a fight. Our situation was really dangerous. We were faced with possibly of having to compete with two frigates, each of which was individually stronger than us. If the enemy had in some way learned before us of the outbreak of the war, he would have been able to destroy us with the first salvo. To escape an encounter with the English, S.S. Lessowski took a course directly to the west. The wind had freshened a little, we now had an advantage over the French, and they were gradually falling behind. Twice they tried to transfer their course north, then followed us yet again when they realised that we were on a steady course. By evening we had left them so far behind that, taking advantage of the darkness, we could finally free ourselves by a change of course from this uninvited companion. In Honolulu we learned from the Captain of the British frigate "Trincomalee" that he had met our frigate "Aurora" in Callao and that Captain Isylmetjew had indicated that he intended to call at the Sandwich Islands on the way to Petropavlovsk. In Honolulu, other Anglo-French ships were expected, and as we reckoned that war would break out any day a further stay there appeared to us to be dangerous.

⁷⁷ According to the British version given here Admiral Price took his own life (see also p. 161).

The Baltic geologist Karl von Ditmar (1821-1892), who in the years 1850/55 explored the Kamchatka Peninsula on behalf of the Russian government and at the time of the attack was not far from Petropavlovsk, reported, however, in his journal ("Stay and Travel in Kamchatka", ed. by the Academy of Sciences, St. Petersburg, 1890) the views of local witnesses that Admiral Price, in trying to enforce access the port, was mortally wounded by a shrapnel round from the Russian coastal battery. Both views agree that the admiral was buried on the shores of the Okhotsk Sea.

After we had completed our provisioning in great haste, we hurried to put to sea. Lessowski left a letter to Isylmetjew in which he informed him that he would wait for him for two weeks on a given latitude and longitude north of the Sandwich Islands, but after that period he intended to return to Honolulu. Since we did not meet "Aurora" we arrived exactly two weeks later in Honolulu. We expected an encounter with the enemy and were therefore on full alert. In the roads we found not a single warship before us. From an American yacht sailing past us a man called us saying that war had broken out. We did not cast anchor, but lay off until the delayed mail had been picked up from the shore. From the newspapers we learned that France and England had declared war on 12 March⁷⁸ and since our last visit, neither the "Aurora" nor any enemy ships had shown themselves in Honolulu. Later we heard from stories that the "Trincomalee", after they had left Honolulu the day after us, had met the "Aurora" in the area of the Sandwich Islands. Both ships had been put on alert status in case that the other should know already of the outbreak of war. They sailed past, not far from each other, looking down the barrels of each other's guns.

On the orders received in Honolulu we sailed from there to the Amur estuary, where we intended to rendezvous with the "Pallada". The same order also awaited the "Aurora" but they did not get it. She sailed directly to Petropavlovsk, therefore, in accordance with the previously received instructions. Meanwhile, the British and French ships had united to a common squadron on the west coast of America, under the command of Admiral Price and set off for Petropavlovsk. British officers told me that their admiral had made this decision without previous orders, at his own risk and only on persuasion of his subordinates, especially the commander of the frigate "Pick", Sir Frederic Nicholson. The old man was himself undecided over this, because he feared to arouse by such action the indignation of his government. In the inner harbour of Petropavlovsk the united squadron found the frigate "Aurora", the corvette "Olwudez" and the transport "Dvina". Our ships were broadside on to a flat, sandy spit of land across which they could shoot at the approaching enemy. The entrance to the harbour lay between the tip of the peninsula and an elevated cape, on which there was a battery of some of the guns from the "Aurora". After their arrival in Awatscha Bay the combined squadron had initially lain at anchor outside the range of our guns. Early the next day, the two flagship frigates were taken in tow by a steamer and faced our battery on the Cape, which bravely defended itself against the enemy, attacking with 60 heavy calibre guns. Unfortunately, the battery stood before a rocky mountain, so that the gun crew had to suffer not only from the enemy's shells, but also from the pelting of rocks from behind them. The battery was, in these circumstances, soon silenced. The brave battery commander, Prince Maksutov, had an arm ripped off by a cannon

⁷⁸ It should read 28 March; see Note 1.

ball. After this success, the ships of the two Admirals were towed back to their previous positions in order to repair their not insignificant damage.

It is said that the large number of dead and wounded had severely shaken Admiral Price. Immediately after the “President” dropped anchor, a shot was heard from the Admiral’s cabin. The old gentleman had taken his own life. This sad event threw the allies into great confusion. The command of the combined squadron should have been transferred to the French Admiral, but the proud “Albion”⁷⁹ did not want to submit to any foreigner, and then began a duality of power. The senior officer among the English commanders, Sir Frederic Nichelson, took command over his countrymen. After the Admiral and the other fallen soldiers had been buried on the barren shore, there was uncertainty over the advance of the operations yet to be undertaken. The Russians, meanwhile, had not slept, the battery was repaired and the damaged guns were replaced by new ones. Finally, Nichelson had completed his plan for the city to be attacked from the land side. Sloops manned with units were deployed from all the ships for a landing which was carried out near the Nikolskoye mountain that separates the city and the harbour from Avacha Bay. As soon as it was recognised that the troop movement was directed against the city, rifle units were immediately deployed. From the ridge the allies were at first greeted with a volley and then, without wasting any time, attacked with bayonets with the officers at the head of the assailants shouting their battle cry. The front ranks of the enemy were driven back to the main forces whereupon the whole tangle – a total of about 800 men – rolled down the steep mountainside. It was such a panic that not only people of different ships, but also British and French, were all together on the sloops on which the enemy escaped. Many casualties were left on the beachhead, among them Captain Parker, who had had command of the landing troops. Our force, standing at a total of only 200 men, pursued the fugitives from the shore with shots.

After the defeat, the squadron remained inactive for several days and then went to San Francisco. From there, Sir Frederic Nichelson sent the British government his famous report in which he claimed that Petropavlovsk, in terms of its fortifications, was a second Sevastopol that could not be taken with such weak forces as those available to the allied squadrons; and that the heroic attack had cost the Allies a great sacrifice, but had been tenfold greater in losses for the Russians. When this boastful report arrived in England, however, another was already there, from Russian sources via Berlin, about the actual course of battle. One may well argue that the allies, with more energy and better organization, would, with their superior forces, have been in a position to destroy our ships in the shortest possible time and to occupy the city. It is noteworthy that the English, both in Petropavlovsk and de Castries, have not risked attacks on our ships. France and England had decided to increase its fleet in the Pacific

⁷⁹ Albion: old poetic name for England.

significantly, and repeated the attack on Petropavlovsk in 1855. England sent Admiral Bruce with the ship of the line “Monarch” into the Pacific Ocean in the company of some frigates. The commander of the squadron in the Chinese waters, Admiral Sterling, was ordered at the same time to send four pennants to Kamchatka to reinforce Bruce: a sail frigate, two screw corvettes and the steam frigate “Barracouta” which should await the arrival of the combined squadron, under Bruce’s command, at a specified latitude and longitude, 150 miles away from Petropavlovsk. These four vessels alone had the necessary fighting strength to attack Petropavlovsk. Somehow, rather than act, they circled around a point in the ocean for six weeks in anticipation of the main forces, and did not once resolve to come closer Petropavlovsk to observe the harbour. Thanks to this senseless behaviour, our ships were freely able to depart the Amur, without coming into contact with the enemy during the entire duration of their journey. It remains completely incomprehensible why even the English steamers avoided approaching Petropavlovsk, the more so when they were aware that with the exception of the small schooner “Vostok” we did not possess a single steam ship across the whole Pacific Ocean. Captain Sterling and the other officers, from whose stories I retell these events, justify themselves with the fact that they were strictly bound to follow the orders they were given.

Finally the fleet of Admiral Bruce met at the point where the squadron had awaited them doing nothing for six weeks in the Chinese waters. All the ships sailed along the coast of Kamchatka, where they experienced such a violent storm that the entire fleet was dispersed. The “Barracouta” went under sail⁸⁰ with its boiler shut down and therefore lost contact with all other ships. After the storm had subsided, Sterling fired up the boiler again and made for Avacha Bay. As he approached the entrance there, and saw none of the allied ships, he assumed they were already in the bay. In order not to be late for battle, he decided to look inside the bay, and approached the harbour briefly. But how great was his surprise when he found it deserted by all Russian ships and found that the battery had also been evacuated. After he was satisfied that he had reached Petropavlovsk before the admiral, Sterling left the bay again before the onset of night. Towards morning the whole Anglo-French squadron assembled off Avacha bay. The admiral ordered the steamers to start raising steam. As the boilers were still hot on the “Barracouta”, Sterling achieved this relatively quickly, and he soon approached the Admiral’s ship. Bruce and Sterling’s father were close friends, and Sterling himself had even been Flag Lieutenant to Bruce; he was invited for breakfast. On the one hand, Sterling wanted to inform the Admiral of what he had seen in Petropavlovsk, on the other hand he was apprehensive because of his independent visit to an enemy harbour. During the meal, the Admiral asked the

⁸⁰ According to a statement of the National Maritime Museum (Greenwich), “Barracouta” belonged to a widespread class of ships in those days that one can describe as a “half-sailer, half-steamer”. Because of the significant coal consumption of the first steam engines, it was necessary to be able to propel as necessary under sail.

Captain, where he had been the night before, when all the ships had gathered around the “Monarch”. Sterling remained silent and acted as if he had not heard the question but it was repeated. Sterling replied, courage in hand: “Petropavlovsk!” Hardly had he uttered that magic word than the Admiral let knife and fork fall from his hands, his face betraying the highest expression of surprise: “Are you crazy?”, he asked finally, his eyes not leaving his addressee. Then Sterling told him all that he had experienced. Bruce gradually convinced himself that Sterling was still fully in possession of his senses, and sent a signal to all commanders to gather to him. One of the first to arrive was Sir Frederic Nicholson who, after the admiral had told him about Sterling’s observations, broke out into a peal of laughter and tried to prove that Sterling had made an error and had mistaken another bay for Petropavlovsk. Sterling was at first a little confused by this self-assurance. A glance at the map soon convinced him fact that a mistake was impossible because it was near no other bay, even remotely similar to the Avacha bay. Sterling then contradicted Nicholson, who still would not believe that the Russians could have left this “second Sevastopol” unnoticed. The admiral finally ordered the whole armada to take the sailing vessels in tow and to go to Petropavlovsk. This is where all could convince themselves that no “second Sevastopol” existed and that both the city and the port lay there completely deserted. The only inhabitant of the region was the representative of an American trading company, who had flown the American flag over his home. The English searched all the houses for loot and destroyed the coastal battery by blowing the frozen soil into the air with powder. In a remote part of the bay Admiral Bruce accidentally discovered a transport ship of the Russian-American Company, which had not been able to leave Petropavlovsk on time, and which had been dismantled and hidden there. The vessel was naturally treated as a prize and taken back as the only trophy from these distant waters. Subsequently we learned that Admiral Putjatin had approached Petropavlovsk, on his schooner “Heda” that had been built in Japan, just at the time the enemy fleet had gathered at the entrance. Although he saw the hostile ships lying in the far distance, Yefim Vasilyevich was fortunate enough to get in close to the shore, unnoticed in the bay, and went ashore not far from the entrance. From the top of a hill, he was satisfied that the internal waters were free of enemy ships. He then entered the harbour on the “Heda”. To his great disappointment he must have seen that all of our ships had already sailed to the Amur. After the fresh water supplies had been replenished, the “Heda” left the harbour again on the following night and under cover of darkness passed by the enemy’s squadron unseen. Just at the entrance to the Tatar Sound the English Admiral’s frigate “Winchester”, which was returning from de Castries, was seen by moonlight. In the distance many other lights had been seen. The “Winchester” had prepared to monitor the schooner. After she had already neared them the pursuit was for some reason called off. When Count Lütke⁸¹

⁸¹ Probably refers to Friedrich Graf Lütke (1797-1882), Imperial Russian Admiral and circumnavigator of the world.

recalled this incident many years later in conversation with some English officers one of his listeners sprang up, beating his fist on the table, and exclaimed: "Damn, it was my watch!"⁸²

The stories of English eyewitnesses of the events at Petropavlovsk and all other actions of the enemy in the Russian waters kept us interested especially since life in Nagasaki is not characterised by variety. We were otherwise bored and we looked forward with impatience to the arrival of Admiral Sterling. After the squadron had been waiting completely inactive for four weeks, he arrived in company with the French admiral. All commanders immediately gathered with their leader, and we waited in suspense for the return of Captain Sterling from this visit. He came back late at night and told us that his father had not yet decided whether we, as we had wished, would be released and landed on the shores of the Okhotsk Sea; he had reservations about sending his ships so far to the north so late in the season (we were already in the second half of September). Having spent almost a week in debates of this uncertainty, Commander Eliot, accompanied by two captains, appeared on the "Barracouta" one morning. He had Pushkin and me called to the quarterdeck and told us solemnly that the Admiral had decided out of pity for us to accept the heavy responsibility for our release; it could only be effected, however, by our delivery to a Russian warship against a receipt from its commander. We listened with astonishment to this remarkable offer and waited silently for further explanation. Apparently expecting a response, the Commander finally asked if we were ready to accept the proposal. "Of course we agree," we said, "but we do not quite understand how the commitment can be met as the Admiral intends. As far as we know, you searched in vain, all summer long, for our vessels and obviously still do not yet know where they are." – "No, we now know the whereabouts." the Commander disagreed categorically. "Well," we answered, "but there is still the question of whether a meeting of your ships with the Russians will not result in a fight?" – "Probably so" was the somewhat hesitant response from Eliot. "When do you intend to deliver us in this case: before or after the battle?" – "I think after the battle" the commander said somewhat hesitantly, to which we replied: "But after the battle, our ships are either destroyed or yours have been taken as bounty by us." – "No, I am convinced that your ships will be captured by us," Eliot interrupted me. "How then do you carry out your plan?" we responded. To that we got no reply, but I heard, as the Commander, a few steps away from us, whispered softly to his comrades: "You see, exactly as I have already told the Admiral."

⁸² Goncharov, cited above, writes that Admiral Putiatin safely reached the mouth of the Amur on the schooner "Heda". From there he went with his companions on a small boat up the river and arrived, after a three-month long adventurous journey of more than 3000 km through then quite unexplored area, at the Russian Fort Usti-Strelka (at the confluence of the Argun and Shilka). From there he was able to travel in the normal way to St. Petersburg.

After some discussion all three officers left the “Barracouta”. After an hour they came back and told us that the Admiral had come to the realisation that the execution of his proposal would be fraught with some difficulties. But he was willing to land us on the Amur under cover of a parlementaire flag⁸³, if we could guarantee through our written word of honour that neither the ships nor the Russian coastal batteries, would shoot at the English. At the same time Eliot said it was his duty, to dust off the popular fairy tales of the English newspapers, that the Russians were such barbarians, that they did not comply with truce and that they had fired on sloops with white flags both at Odessa and in Hangö⁸⁴. We agreed to pledge our word of honour that the Englishmen would not be fired on, as long as they kept strictly to the international agreements about parlementaires, i.e. to await our negotiator out of range of gunfire. “Otherwise”, we concluded, “our gunboats and coastal batteries (which we already knew did not exist at all) will not allow you to proceed to the mouth of the Amur.” The Commander replied that the Admiral definitely intended that the English ships would bring us into the Amur. We tried to explain to him that, if we were released on the Bay de Castries, and were given provisions for ten days, we could easily reach the Amur on foot through the forest. The period stated was deliberately long enough to leave the English unclear as to how close the bay actually was from the Amur; 24 hours would have sufficed perfectly.

The Commander said that our desire was already known to the Admiral through his son, but he feared that we, and our crew, might even die in the woods. We asked that he be informed that we were no less concerned about our men and that we would even be ready to confirm in writing our assumption of full responsibility for their welfare. The officers just shrugged their shoulders and left us again. When they appeared for the third time, the Commander said that the Admiral could not leave us in de Castries to go ashore because this was not a Russian but a Chinese territory. “De Castries belongs to the Russian occupiers, and even if it were Chinese, I believe that the heavy responsibility that you say that your Admiral will take with our release, would be lessened by landing us at a neutral location.” – “No, you can not be landed at de Castries, because this could be taken as recognition by us of a Russian claim to this area,” said Eliot. “This right has been recognised on the part of England for a long time.” – “England has never given and will never give such recognition.” Eliot interrupted me – “On what grounds then have you fired shots in de Castries at a storehouse and at the woods?” Eliot was a bit embarrassed and said, “That means nothing!” “It may appear so to you, but nevertheless with the bombardment you have proved the

⁸³ Parlementaire: A parlementaire is a person who is authorised by one party to a conflict to speak with another party to the conflict, and who travels under a white flag (the Truce Flag).

The Truce Flag is protected by international law. A parlementaire may not be directly attacked, and almost always has the right not to be arrested, detained, or executed.

⁸⁴ Hangö: port city in southern Finland. The fortifications were destroyed in 1854 by the Russians.

coast to be Russian. On neutral territory, you would certainly not have damaged the forest by gunfire.” The Commander, slightly embarrassed, lowered his eyes and murmured: “The shots were fired accidentally.” “We are still unfamiliar with the official regulations on English ships,” I replied, “but I can assure you that with us not even a single blind shot can be given in error and that an accidental bombardment is totally unimaginable.” – “You stay in captivity!” Eliot cried out. – “You have the law of the jungle,” I replied, “but I hope you will not refuse to pass on to your Admiral our view that he is far from being a gentleman.” – “How can you be so insubordinate as to say such a thing?” Eliot cried again. “I have every right to do so, as a noble-minded person was never, for no reason at all, so offensive to defenceless people who are totally in his power, as has been the Admiral.” – “With what has the Admiral offended you?” asked Eliot in surprise. – “I am sure a British officer would regard as an insult an offer to be a traitor.” – “No one expected you to do anything like that.” – “Do you really think we would not have noticed from the first word where this whole conversation was heading? You obviously reckoned that we would betray the whereabouts of the Russian ships. When that failed, you tried with our help to get knowledge of the fairway to the Amur. No, your Admiral is certainly not a gentleman, and, had you been, you should have refused to transmit such degrading deals.” Here the commander blustered and roared: “Do not forget that I can tie you up!” – “This you can do of course, but the Admiral is still not yet a gentleman.” “You stay in captivity!” the Commander repeated several times in a threatening tone, and hastened to leave.

The next day we were transferred to another vessel. Here I was separated from Pushkin. In the following days, such transfers were often repeated. They were quite annoying. Every time you had to get used to other people and to another type of treatment, which depended heavily on the commander. But some funny scenes also occurred during these transfers, over which I can now only laugh. At the time I certainly did not at all feel like laughing. One morning I was awakened at 4 o'clock with the message that it has been ordered for me, along with 30 sailors, to transfer immediately to the French frigate “Sibylle”. I dressed hurriedly, took my belongings and boarded a launch that took me to my destination. The deck had just been scrubbed when we arrived. The officer announced our arrival to the captain, but he declared that he could not take us into custody without having received the order of the French admiral. We were then transported to the English frigate “Sibyl”, but again, we were rejected. They then asked their admiral for new instructions. Because of the early hour this was long in coming. Finally it turned out that we should originally have been placed on the English frigate “Nanking”. This whole process had me so upset that after my agitated arrival on the deck of the “Nanking” I went below without even greeting the duty officer. Soon, out of a cabin door, appeared Captain Stuart, a small stout man in a short jacket and a hat in the style of hats that were worn by our retainers. He asked the lieutenant on duty, where the officer was, who had arrived together with the captured sailors, and then glaring at me asked in heavily accented

English: "Parlez vous Français?" To my affirmative reply, he turned to the duty officer and told him this was the only French phrase he knew and therefore asked him for help with the conversation. That officer knew no foreign languages, and a French-speaking lieutenant was sent for. In anticipation of his arrival, we were walking on the quarterdeck, I on one side and the captain on the other side. My anger had been violently aroused. Meanwhile, the duty officer had ordered our sailors to stow their kit below decks. When they did not understand him, he gave one of them a blow with his hand and pointed downward. When I saw this, I went up to him and said in English: "If you want to give my people orders, please contact me, then you do not have to strike them, and there will be no misunderstandings between us." Even before I had finished the sentence, the lieutenant told the Captain that I understood English. "Why did you say, then, that you did not speak English?" – "I never said that," I replied. "You heard, though, that I can not speak French." – "Certainly I heard that and was wondering, that you wanted to use a language that you do not command." Very soon after that I was off the "Nanking" onto the frigate "Pick", where I met up again with Pushkin. Our dealings with Commander Sir Frederic Nicholson were cool but polite. With the other officers we had few exchanges. There was no room for us, which was very uncomfortable. At night hammocks were hung for us on the gun deck, and during the day we stayed in the officers' mess.

In early October the "Pick" left for Hong Kong and we arrived in the city two weeks later. A few days before we left, the Admiral had sent the frigate "Sibyl" with the screw corvettes "Hornet" and "Encounter" to the Amur estuary under the command of Commander Eliot. We were delighted that the best time of year for such an expedition had been missed, and had no doubt that the operation would be denied success. The indecision of Eliot and the reluctance of the English commanders to take the slightest responsibility upon themselves, contributed to our being able to look forward with equanimity to the outcome of the undertaking. Our expectations were fulfilled in full measure: the squadron returned, self-satisfied with its inaction, to Hong Kong. From the officers, we learned that they had lain for several days in de Castries at anchor, then some sailors were sent ashore to collect firewood. When the people were fired on from the shore, the sloops, I think with six wounded, returned to their ships. Their attempts to get to the Amur lagoon had ended when the "Hornet" was run onto a sand bank. They expected the appearance of our gunboats at any moment. Then it had snowed, and some ice even formed. All activity to refloat the "Hornet" was brought to a halt as the water level began to rise unexpectedly and the corvette broke free only to run firmly aground again once under its own power. That was the total achievement of the operations of this large squadron, consisting of 26 pennants, against our completely defenceless shores.

Gradually, the entire fleet gathered in Hong Kong. At first, Sir Frederic Nicholson did not allow us to go ashore, but he then followed the example of other commanders. He asked Pushkin and me for a written declaration that we

would make no attempt to escape, and considered the matter done. Pushkin and I rented a small room in a hotel in the city where we met daily with our comrades from the other ships. At night we all went back to the ship. In Hong Kong, we also found ourselves invited to some private houses, mostly American. We were treated especially kindly by the old Burrows, a very affable American, and by the Hamburg merchant Pustau. The latter was the owner of the brig "Greta". Despite the fact that he had lost his ship on our account and was described by the English newspapers as a "Russian spy", he provided us with generous hospitality. We were happy every time we were invited to a lunch, since we only had very little cash and from thrift often fed only on bread and fruit. Wherever possible, we avoided returning to the meals on board.

The mail arrived in Hong Kong from Europe once every two weeks. We read the bad news about the progress of the war, for which we waited with unease, almost with fear. Thus we learned more about the bombardment of Sveaborg⁸⁵, when our guns did not meet the objectives, and the unfortunate outcome of the battle on the Chornaya⁸⁶. The unpromising news from Sevastopol hung like a nightmare over us. Never will I forget the horrible day when we learned that the fortress had fallen. The mail steamer was decorated all over with flags for its arrival in the harbour. The British were jubilant, while we could only hold back our tears with difficulty. It was unbearable for me to see this general joy at our misfortune. Alongside the "Pick" was a small Chinese boat of a fruit merchant. After permission had been given to go ashore, I boarded that boat and ordered the owner to take me somewhere in a lonely place, as far as possible outside the city. Once there I climbed up the steep shore with great difficulty, but once I stopped and turned, I still had the same vision I had been trying to get away from, the whole city and all the ships were covered in flags and the salutes of the guns wrapped the harbour in white powder smoke. My heart stopped. There was no doubt: Sevastopol, our pride and our bastion, had been taken. I do not know how long I sat on a rock immersed in the deep pain; it seemed to me as if all was now lost. A cold shiver, running through my the whole body even though I was sitting in the blazing Mediterranean sun, finally made me come to my senses. I got up and with quick steps went up even higher. With pleasure I sat with the scorching sun rays on my back. Deliberately stepping aside to avoid any contact with other people, I only returned to the city once darkness had fallen. In the hotel Pushkin and the other fellows confirmed to me that our fears had come true. On my return to the frigate late that night I just reported to the duty officer and then immediately went to sleep. In the night I awoke with a chill; I trembled and felt so weak that I could only speak with difficulty. I cannot remember what happened next. After several days, when I did come back to my senses, I was in

⁸⁵ Sveaborg: 18th Century fortifications in Helsinki, which belonged to Russia from 1809-1917, see Note 72.

⁸⁶ Chornaya: river in the Crimea, a counter-attack by the Russians was defeated by the Allies here on 16 August 1855.

an English hospital, on a disused ship in the harbour. I was literally fed on quinine which had me recovering fully after two weeks. On my release the doctor told me that he had regarded my illness in the first few days as hopeless, and that he had never experienced a patient recovering so quickly after such a severe attack of Hong Kong fever. During my illness, Pushkin had written a letter in French to Admiral Sir James Sterling, noting the bleak situation of our sailors who, ragged and without any cash, did not have the opportunity to satisfy their needs. Most of them did not even have a piece of soap. The men also complained over the meagre biscuit rations. The Admiral responded verbally to Pushkin, that the sailors would get just what was due to a prisoner of war, so we had achieved nothing.

Our long presence on the ships was obviously annoying to the English, but they found no suitable way to get rid of us. Through the officers, we learned of various plans of the Admiral, but this only revealed his indecision. None of them was put into effect. Finally, we heard that the Admiral wanted to send our sailors to the Australian gold mines, to escape our influence, and to send the officers to Trincomalee in Ceylon. That was aimed at stripping the men of our moral hold and, after complete demoralisation, lure them into the service of the English. We did not want to believe this at first, until we learned to our shock from a reliable source that the Admiral was quite satisfied with this plan and wanted to get it under way in a very short time. Absolutely anything now had to be done to bring this project to failure. To this end we decided to exploit the press. At that time two large sheets were published in Hong Kong, the "China Mail" and "China Serial". The first constantly emphasised the achievements of the governor of the island and pounced on the admiral because of his inactivity and aimlessness. Vice versa, the other newspaper defended the admiral and attacked the governor. The editor of the "China Mail", Mr. Shortrade, we had met occasionally with Pustau, and once he had even printed articles that were based on our stories.

Pushkin and I now went to this old Scot. He was an original and received us very kindly. We told him about the desperate situation of our sick sailors in the English Hospital: Because they did not have command of the language, they could not even ask the nurses for a sip of water, we only had access to the sick on specified days and had not even been informed upon the death of one of the men, so that Kowalewski and I just by a pure chance were able to attend his funeral. We asked Shortrade to work on the admiral with his paper, so that he would decide not to separate the officers from the enlisted men. The editor listened to us with great attention, but said it would be difficult for him to meet our request, because he could not always write according to his own convictions, but out of deference to public opinion had often to take on from other papers, many things with which he disagreed. A few words of appreciation for the well-known English humanity that his paper particularly promoted seemed to flatter Shortrade. He proffered us Scotch Whisky and promised to think over what we had told him. Two days later an editorial appeared in the "China Mail", with sharp attacks on

the actions of the British fleet in Chinese waters. The admiral was described therein as a coward who sought to take revenge on defenceless prisoners of war for his own failures. Then the author praised the care of the Russian officers for their sailors, in particular for the sick, and regretted that the admiral intended for no reason to deprive the poor men of this support. He also mentioned that the patients, because of their ignorance of the language, did not always receive the necessary care, and drafted in general terms a heart wrenching image of men dying with no comforting, far from home. Finally, it was also pointed out that the Russian sailors, due to a lack of soap, were not in a position to wash themselves, let alone their laundry, and surprise was expressed that no diseases had spread to the English ships. This article, which created a sensation, benefitted us a lot. After a few days we were, in the name of the Admiral, officially told that in future a certain number of Russian sailors in the company of an officer would be added to each ship returning to England. At the same time an issue to each sailor of a piece of soap and a packet of tobacco was ordered.

Soon thereafter we were visited on the "Pick" by Captain Sterling, the former Commander of the "Barracouta". He had me called to the quarterdeck. I was very happy about the reunion with him, for we had been on the best of terms with each other. However, he informed me right at the start of our talk that he came officially this time, on the orders of the Admiral, and began with the fact that the victualling regulations of the English Navy had to be followed exactly and that the Admiral was not, in spite of all his good will, able to increase the daily rations of our people. A prisoner was only entitled to half of what was given to their own men. Soap and tobacco had been given by the Admiral out of pure compassion at his own risk, but it was not yet clear whether this issue would be approved by the Admiralty. Finally, he said, the Admiral intended to soften the lot of the officers to allow each individual between five and ten pounds sterling, but not more. First, I thanked him for the soap and tobacco distributed to the sailors and pointed out that we actually had a great shortage of linen and clothes. I then tacked on the question of whether any possibility existed to grant the officers continuous resources for their livelihood. I added: "As you can see, we battle our way through somehow, but in the near future we will have to run around in our birthday suits." The captain replied that the admiral could pay a limited subsistence allowance to the officers who catered for themselves, but they would then not be entitled to eat on the ships to which they were attached; this little support he would give us out of pity and at his own risk. I bowed and asked that he pass to the Admiral that we would rather endure any hardship, rather than to receive alms from Admiral Sterling. I concluded by saying: "It is extremely painful to have to talk in this tone so directly with you, Captain, when I am so much indebted to you for your consideration and your noble conduct towards me, but since you have explained to me that you spoke with me on behalf of your superior, I am left no other answer." We bowed coolly to each other and parted. I was very sorry that I was compelled to speak to the Captain of his father in that

tone. In an effort to wipe away this unpleasant feeling, a few days later I went on board the mail steamer on which Sterling, after he had handed over command of his ship, was to return home. I thanked him again for his warm attitude towards me and wished him well. Not a word was mentioned of our previous meeting, and we parted as good friends.

At the end of November, Pushkin and I together with 30 of our sailors were transferred to the screw corvette "Rotler"⁸⁷ which was about to return to England. After a hasty farewell to our comrades and the remaining crew and some friends in town we moved in the evening into a wonderful, spacious cabin, which we had been given on the instructions of the kind Captain Fellows. The next morning, on 26 November we weighed anchor and proceeded out to sea under steam, but soon after leaving the harbour the fire in the boiler was extinguished and we set sail. From the first day we clearly felt how much more kindly we were treated here by the captain and the officers than on the "Pick". We dined with the officers in their mess, but Fellows also often summoned us to join him. He spoke fluent French, so that Pushkin, who knew no English and in principle opposed that language, often spent the whole day in the company of this charming, educated, no longer young captain. During the first lunch with Fellows, I was deeply touched by his thoughtfulness. It was customary among the English that, after eating, everything was cleared away from the table, and usually even the table cloth was replaced. Replenished carafes of wine were then brought out, and once all the glasses were filled, the host or the most senior at the table, said the word "Queen". We of course refused to drink the health of the Queen of England. At the first lunch with Fellows I had stretched out my hand to push aside my glass as I was accustomed to do in such cases, when Fellows instead of "Queen" said "Absent friends." I knew how strictly people in England chose to observe the customary rites, where there could not be even the slightest change, and I was surprised and touched so deeply at the sensitivity of the Captain. I raised my glass in order to drink his health, thanked him for his attention and said my regret that through our presence he had been induced to depart from a long standing tradition. Fellows replied very graciously that he had never intended to break with an old custom, and had only used other words to express the underlying thoughts. He added, "If we drink to the health of our absent friends, nobody can prevent us thinking of our Queen, or like you, your Emperor." After this incident, we also followed the example of the Captain in the officers' mess.

We sailed directly to the Cape of Good Hope and stopped just once for a few hours at the city of Anjer on Java. Due to the prevailing wind, the trip was long and very monotonous. On the corvette, dysentery broke out amongst the English crew, which the ship's doctor, an old man, could no longer control. It seemed to me that his medical knowledge was fairly limited and he tried to cure all diseases with opium and mercury.

⁸⁷ Rotler: actually "Rattler".

Soon our sailors also began to die. Every time the doctor visited our men I went with him and tried to alleviate the lot of my fellow servicemen as far as possible. But nothing helped. On this stretch of the journey three Russians died and six British. The doctor claimed at each death that the disease as such had already been mastered, and that death had only occurred due to weakness. The first to die was our sailor Maslow. Two days later another sailor was completely at the end of his tether. In the evening I sat on the bed of the delirious man. Suddenly he lifted his head and said quietly and distinctly: "Well, Maslow, I'm coming!" (He knew nothing of that death.) I said to the sick man that Maslow was really not there. – "What do you mean, he is not here, can you not see how he stands there and calls me? – Well, Maslow, I come!" With these words he closed his eyes and died. A third sailor died with the Cape of Good Hope in sight. He was an Estonian. I tried to talk to him in his native language, although I do not speak it particularly well. Over and over again, he begged like a child for me to give him a sip of milk, and he constantly repeated that that would alleviate his pain. "Piima, piima!"⁸⁸ he cried every time I came to his bed. I was looking forward to arriving soon in Simonstown, where I could buy milk for him, but he died on the eve of our arrival. All these deaths put Pushkin and me completely off balance, and we could not wait any longer for our arrival in port. Eventually we lay at anchor on 3 January 1856 in the roads of Simons Bay, after a nine week long passage. The next morning, some very seriously ill, including two of our sailors, were taken to the hospital in the city. One of them, a Catholic, died after two days. When he realised all was over with him, he asked for communion and the last rites.

I went to the only Catholic priest in Simonstown and asked him to come to the patient. At first he made some difficulties, probably due to uncertainty whether the dying man was in fact Catholic, and apologised for his ignorance of Russian. After some effort, I succeeded after all to persuade him to come with me. He required from me, however, a written confirmation of the denomination of the sick man. The minister behaved very lovingly towards the dying man; later he even offered to bury him. A few days later another sailor, whose condition had already improved once, was losing strength. He also asked for the sacrament. I told him that there was no Russian priest at the place, at which he asked whether there was not an English clergyman able to perform these functions. The priest was gladly ready to comply with the wish. With the confession and the absolution I served, as far as it was in my power, as a translator. The gratitude of the sick person, after he had received the Communion was almost touching. Two days later he also died as the last victim of the terrible disease. To strengthen the health of the rest of the men, Pushkin asked the Captain to permit them to exercise in walks ashore. We undertook to guarantee their timely return to the ship, if we were allowed to take the organisation of these excursions in our hands. Fellows replied to us with his usual kindness that he did not doubt our words of honour,

⁸⁸ Piima: *Piima* is milk in the Estonian language

but expressed surprise that we wanted to be responsible for men over whom during the period of captivity we had exercised almost no command authority. "I myself could not even vouch for my best people," he commented. We tried to make him understand that it would not be possible without such hygienic measures to completely bring to a halt the illnesses whose number had already increased markedly since our arrival in Simonstown. The Captain replied, after some thought, that he had no objection to the walks, but before his decision could be final he must obtain the consent of the port commander. The same evening Fellows told us that the port commander was also in agreement, but that that he required a written confirmation of our liability. Fellows added that he still trusted our word without that and renounced such a document. Pushkin now gathered all our men and told them that we had both, in the hope that they would not betray our trust in front of the Englishmen, taken over liability for their behaviour and that any attempt to escape would result in the withdrawal of the approval, not only for the offender but also for the remainder of his companions. It would also be completely hopeless, because the refugee would be arrested immediately and a severe punishment would be administered. We divided the people into three groups of eight men, with the 25th, an under-officer, to supervise. They were ordered to remain together during these trips and to respect each other. From our own pockets, we gave each man ten shillings, escorted the first group to the pier and dismissed them with orders to be back there at 8 o'clock. To our great satisfaction, and to the surprise of the English, who never used to report back on time, everyone was again on hand at the appointed hour. The men were slightly under the influence and one even had to be carried by his comrades. The next day, the second group was sent ashore and on the following day the third. The astonishment of the English officers had no limits, they could not believe how disciplined the men were, that no one was late and that, in a drunken state, they started no fights. Fellows offered the opportunity for each group to go ashore again, which we accepted gratefully. During a lunch to which the harbour master had invited Pushkin and me, he thanked us for the good conduct of the people and deplored the fact that in the English Navy only half of the sailors usually returned from shore leave on time.

Gradually, all of our patients recovered so well that Pushkin and I sought a two day leave to Cape Town, where all the officers of the corvette were already staying. One morning we rented a small conveyance. On the way we had breakfast in a nice inn from the Dutch era. Above the entrance door to this very clean house was a notice in Dutch. The Dutch host told us that this sign had once vanished on a dark night and only 2½ years later reappeared in its former place. Later it became clear that some young British officers, after a cheerful dinner, had made off for Cape Town with the sign and had hung it back in its original location after 2½ years on their return from China.

In Cape Town we lived in an hotel. Numerous people, apparently well known to each other, joined us at the table d'hôte. From their discussions we

found that it was patronised by a large proportion of the steamer passengers on their way to Australia. My neighbour at the table listened for a long time to our Russian conversation, until he finally apologised for his curiosity and asked what language we were speaking. The news that we were Russians spread rapidly around the table and we were, especially by the ladies, besieged with questions about life in Russia as well as about our treatment on the ships during the time of our captivity. Some naiveties were probably inevitable: a lady wanted to know whether in our climate it was at all possible to build houses with windows, and whether it was true that in Moscow wolves and bears were running around on the streets. On the question of our arrest, I said that after the sinking of our ship we had been captured, unarmed, on our journey home, and also expressed the hope that the British government would release us soon. At these words I was cut off by an elderly gentleman at the other end of the table who said: "In your own interest I hope that you will stay at least two years in England. You will be grateful to experience some culture there." I resumed and said that civility, one of the key features of culture, did not, to judge from his words, seem to be spread particularly strongly in England. The audience broke out laughing, my interlocutor showed surprise, and I myself felt hurt: "England is well known throughout the world because of its high level of education, I do not know why I should give any precedence to Russia, this country where until now there have not even been printed books."

"Allow me to note," I interrupted, "that the educated class of society in Russia read more books than those in England."

"What boasting!" cried my adversary.

"That's not boasting, but a fact that can be easily proved. We all read what is printed in English, French, German, and in our native language, while in England, someone who speaks even only one foreign language belongs to the exceptions."

"We do not need foreign-language books, all you could read in them, we already know," was the reply of the self-satisfied Englishman.

"The Chinese think they are better educated than others, and refer to all foreigners – the English are not excluded – as barbarians," I said, got up and, as the meal was by then over, left the restaurant together with Pushkin. My opponent shouted something after me that I could not understand. The next day we met two of the participants in the lunch, who expressed the hope that we had formed no misconceptions about English gentlemen after the stupid behaviour of the artillery colonel. They made fun of him and told me he had particularly resented the comparison with a Chinese.

Soon after our return to the ship we put to sea again and continued our trip to England. The evening before the departure, the governor of Cape Town, Sir George Gray, sent us and the sailors some baskets of wonderful fruit as well as

twenty watermelons⁸⁹. I thanked him by letter for the attention, and our people entertained the English sailors, who also did not forget. In general, a good relationship existed between the British and Russian sailors. The latter repaired the clothes and boots of the English so that they earned some money. We noticed that they themselves did not even know how to sew a button. Even the smallest repair work was handed over to a tailor on arrival in a port.

The English adopted only the very vilest insults from the Russian sailors. One of our under-officers told me: "Once they learned the meaning of the words, they liked them a lot, and all were eager to learn as quickly as possible."

While continuing the trip we stopped for a few hours at the island of St. Helena, formed out of a huge rock. On a clear day we had already seen it from a distance of 50 miles. The constant southeast trade wind drove the ocean waves onto the south coast and caused a strong surf which was even apparent on the northern, sheltered coast of the island, on the roadstead of Saint James Town, making the landing of sloops unpleasant. This small town lay in a narrow ravine steeply dropping to the sea and was protected on the sea side by a stone wall bearing gun emplacements. We went through a gate in the ramparts and arrived on a small platform from which a staircase with 600 steps led up to the battery (Ladder Hill). Pushkin, an English lieutenant and I rode to Longwood, where Napoleon was imprisoned and had died. Along the way one could see from afar an attractive looking little house, with a garden, located in a valley. It was Brujars. Here Napoleon had spent the first weeks of his stay on the island. But the English had probably considered this location too comfortable for such a dangerous man and later brought him to the highest summit of the rock, to Longwood, which was alternately wrapped in dense fog or lay exposed to the scorching rays of the tropical sun. The property of the Emperor had consisted of three rooms. The roof was so porous that the rain could penetrate into the house and forced the sick Napoleon to move out of his bedroom into the living room. There, he died.

As we were shown the final home of the great general, against an entrance fee of two shillings per person, his former reception room was filled with straw, in the living room was a grain sieve and in the bedroom two horses. The dirty walls were scribbled with the names of visitors. Alongside this miserable hut stood a large stone house that, according to the caretaker, was built for the Emperor, but was only finished after his death.

But what were all these inconveniences, to which the great Napoleon had been exposed for six years, compared to his emotional pain? He had only been allowed walks on the top of the rock, accompanied by the officer on watch. Everywhere and always he was surrounded by guards. The caretaker could still remember the Emperor. He said that Napoleon had left the house infrequently, in

⁸⁹ Watermelon: from the name *arbuse* used in German settlements in Russia.

order not to see the guards who had stood so close together that, as the old worn-out soldier said, “Not even a rat was able to slip through them.” These small systematic harassments deeply outraged us. How must Napoleon have regretted trusting the humanity of the English and placing himself under their protection at his defeat. It would certainly not have been difficult to take measures that prevented his return to France, while at the same time showing due respect to a man, before whose genius even his enemies bowed. Just the location of the island, where you could land only at a single site, would serve to guard the emperor without any restrictions on his freedom of movement. Throughout the period of Napoleon’s stay on St. Helena, only English ships were allowed into the harbour, and the island was guarded all around by cruisers that prevented the approach of merchantmen. It seems to me that any other precautions were unnecessary. The emperor was really, as Lermontov so rightly expressed it “like him, guarded by the lofty ocean.” Just below the house, in the shade of two weeping willows, lay the last place of rest of Napoleon before his final reburial. We returned to the town along another road and visited the Plantation House, where Napoleon’s jailer and personal enemy, Sir Hudson Loow, had lived. What a contrast between the spacious, comfortable home, surrounded a small shady park, and Longwood! On the same day we continued our trip to England. When we entered the Channel, we were told in thick English in a hoarse voice from a pilot boat, the happy news that peace had been concluded. In Portsmouth, the Corvette received the order to end the campaign. Our amiable Fellows and the other officers took leave of us in the most cordial manner, and we were handed over to the admiral’s ship “Victory”, on which the great Nelson fell at Trafalgar. Brass plates with inscriptions marked the places where he was wounded and died. After two days, we moved over to the giant transport ship “Emperatrice” which had arrived from Plymouth with Russian prisoners of war, who came mostly from Bomarsund and Balaklava⁹⁰. Among them we found to our delight, our comrades from the “Diana”, Seleny, Goschkewitsch, Jelkin and Prince Urussow, who had arrived in England a few days before us. In total there were about 40 officers and over 1500 junior ranks. More than half of the officers consisted of Junkers of various regiments and some writers who had served in England as officers. Apart from a few very nice people, they were complete illiterates, who by their behaviour had certainly damaged the reputation of Russian officers with the Englishmen. On the steamer I also met the priest of the Russian Embassy, Father Yevgeny Ivanovich Popov, who had remained in London during the war and who enjoyed a high reputation. He had visited the prisoners of war and often helped them with money and advice. During the trip from Plymouth to Portsmouth all the better elements had gathered around him. He had shown the officers of the “Diana” particular kindness. From the first moment of our acquaintance, I felt

⁹⁰ Bomarsund: fortifications on the Aland islands, destroyed in 1854 by the English and French.
Balaklava: small harbour on the southern coast of the Crimea, site of battle on 25 October 1854.

particularly attracted to this wise and kindly old man and later had the good fortune to enjoy his friendship until his death. On the ship our countrymen threw several questions at us. Among the other passengers was also a major who had been the commander of a Greek battalion in Balaklava. He spoke very bad Russian. His best friend, whom he introduced to all as aide to the battalion commander, proved later in Libau to be a simple battalion clerk. The old Greek asked me if I belonged to the “Pomasurischen” (Bomarsundschen) group and, when I told of my arrest in the Okhotsk Sea, asked where it lay. For some reason he thought it was not far from Brussels (probably the only name he could think of). When I explained that this sea lay in East Asia, he replied: “Oh, in Asia, so it is in the vicinity of Sukhum⁹¹.” Father Yevgeny Ivanovich, who was a party to this conversation, took me aside and expressed his surprise about how, with such geographical knowledge, the man could ever have risen to the rank of a field officer.

Before leaving Portsmouth we saw a rehearsal for the Fleet Review, which the Queen was to make a few days later. Taking part in this were large fighting units, which had been made ready for deployment into the Baltic Sea, and were lying at anchor in the roads of Spithead because of the now-concluded peace. We were told that there were a total of 350 pennants: 26 ships of the line, 150 gunships and 120 mortar boats as well as a large number of frigates and smaller vessels. With the exception of the mortar boats, the majority consisted of steam ships.

At last the hour of departure arrived. Father Yevgeny Ivanovich celebrated another religious service on board and, after he had affectionately taken leave of us all, went ashore. Our boat set us ashore in Libau on the Saturday of Holy Week. The head of the local garrison, the commander of the Infantry Regiment, Prince Charles of Prussia, Colonel Surkov and their wives received us as their own family and invited us to celebrate the Easter Vigil with all the officers of the regiment.

In St. Petersburg we were very well received by these notables. At the instigation of Adjutant General Putjatin, who had been awarded the title of Count by the Emperor, we were generously rewarded with decorations. For example, the author of these lines, as a hitherto undecorated Lieutenant, received the neck decoration of the “Order of St. Stanislaus”. (Note by PJG: Probably the military Order of St. Stanislaus 2nd Class.) Since arriving in Japan, we had received no pay for 1½ years, so we were excused repayment of the Crown funds we had distributed amongst ourselves at the time of capture. On top of that, it was decreed from on high that each officer of the “Diana” should receive two years’ pay: one to replace the loss of his belongings when the ship sank and the other as an *ex gracia* payment. I went with Seleny to the Treasury in the capital city to receive these amounts so generously allocated to us. In the Navy Ministry we had

⁹¹ Sukhum: port on the Black Sea in the Caucasus.

to present documents to various officials for examination. Everyone who read the words: "The ship sank due to an earthquake in Japan," inquired about the details of this terrible disaster, and consequently we spent almost the whole morning in the Treasury. Finally, we still had to see an old accountant to acknowledge receipt of the money. He took one glance at our paper and then pointed silently to a place in his book, in which we should sign. The talkative Seleny, for about the twelfth time, began with his description of the earthquake. The old man interrupted him politely at the beginning by saying he was very busy and could not listen to reason. But Seleny blithely continued his report with the words: "No, it is not as simple as that, we have told these stories to everyone else, so you too must listen to them."

On the orders of the Emperor, the Japanese government was paid for everything we had been provided with in Japan. In addition, it was also given the guns from the "Diana" that had been brought ashore in Shimoda and the schooner "Heda", built there by us, on which Count Putjatin was carried from Japan to Kamchatka and from there to the Amur⁹².

March 1892

⁹² The donated guns were used in Japan until 1868 as part of a battery of defences in Hakodate. They then stood on show in the local city park. During the Second World War, they are said to have been taken from there and melted down for war purposes (According to George Alexander Lensen, "Report from Hokkaido - The Remains of Russian Culture in Northern Japan" Hakodate 1954).