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FROM KABUL TO KUMASSI

TWENTY-FOUR YEARS OF SOLDIERING AND SPORT



James Wolfe

FROM
KABUL TO KUMASSI
TWENTY-FOUR YEARS OF SOLDIERING AND SPORT

BY BRIGADIER-GENERAL
SIR JAMES WILLCOCKS, K.C.M.G., D.S.O.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY LADY HELEN GRAHAM
AND PHOTOGRAPHS AND MAPS

LONDON
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET
1904

TO

THE DUCHESS OF MONTROSE

THE MOST GRACIOUS OF LADIES

AND KINDEST OF FRIENDS

I DEDICATE

THIS HUMBLE RECORD

OF TWENTY-FOUR YEARS' SERVICE

IN THE ARMY

PREFACE

"Often have I sighed to measure
By myself a lonely pleasure,
Sighed to think I read a book,
Only read, perhaps, by me."

WORDSWORTH.

IT has been my good fortune during my twenty-four years in the Army not only to have been constantly employed on Active Service but to have seen that service in many lands. I have, moreover, had rare opportunities of travelling off the beaten track in countries where big game shooting was plentiful, and have in consequence been able to indulge in that noble sport at the minimum of cost. It is in the hope that the story of these events may prove of interest to a few of my countrymen and, possibly, bring more clearly before them some still little-known portions of our vast Empire, that I have ventured to write this book. If by doing so I may succeed in bringing into the ranks of His Majesty's Army even one good recruit I shall not have written altogether in vain.

The illustrations have been drawn chiefly from my own descriptions, aided in a few cases by photographs or sketches, and those of big game shooting and fighting in Burmah or Ashanti portray the scenes exactly as they appeared to me at the time.

To Lady Helen Graham, who has at immense trouble so kindly illustrated the whole book, I can publicly but ill express my gratitude, but she may feel sure it is owing to her that Wordsworth's lines at the heading of this preface will not apply.

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FROM KABUL TO KUMASSI

CHAPTER I

1877–1879

SANDHURST—JULLUNDER—SIALKOTE—THE AFGHAN WAR—RAWUL PINDI

YOU cannot put old heads on young shoulders, and perhaps it is as well. In my own case I very nearly missed being a soldier because I would not sit down and tackle the hateful books put into my hands by Army tutors. Competitive examinations are necessary evils, but of the trials of life they form a most painful part. At seventeen years of age I went up for my first examination, and failed; this was followed by another a year later, only with no better success, and I then foolishly and hastily made up my mind to try other fields. I left England, the tea gardens of Assam or the coffee plantations of Ceylon appeared to me to be places where competition without examinations could be indulged in. However, long second-class passages in third-class steamers, and the advice of a good father, brought me to my senses, and I once again found myself in England, but with only a few months in hand wherein I might still get my commission, or the age clause would debar me. Hard work and a good tutor passed me into Sandhurst, and in the winter of 1877 I was duly installed as a gentleman cadet at the Royal Military College. I lost two years in seniority, but those two years were not wasted. If you need a lesson in common-sense it is as well to learn it young. Two low-class foreigners were my fellow-passengers in a filthy cabin below water-line during my first outward sea voyage of forty days' duration, and in another passage on an

Italian vessel I had no kind of cabin, but slept on a narrow seat in the petty-officers' mess-room, or wherever else I could find space. The horror of that voyage haunts me still, but it did me good; I had few belongings when we set sail; I had none when we disembarked at an Italian port. An English hotel-keeper kindly lent me enough cash to get as far as Newhaven, where I landed with twopence in the world, and how I arrived in London will not interest anyone.

Sub-lieutenants had just been abolished at Sandhurst, and our batch found themselves with no senior term in residence, consequently we had to make shift for ourselves. The College, as it then was, has been condemned by many as obsolete and out of date; but, personally, I have much to be thankful for to its training. The work was practical and most interesting, the course was not too long, and discipline was, perhaps, sufficiently severe to keep us in order. When I went to Sandhurst I knew none of the Staff, but I soon found a friend in the Governor. It happened thus: A juggler visited the College, and during his performance asked if anybody would hold an apple on the palm of his hand whilst he cut it in halves with a sharp sword. Happening to be sitting close by, I offered to do so. He passed the apple round for inspection, and then, placing it on my open hand, divided it clean with a quick, drawing cut. Looking at General Napier, our Governor, he said, "This was once done by a Native juggler in India, and the man who held the apple was Sir Charles Napier," then, turning to me, he made me regret I had ever placed myself in the position, by addressing me as "The future Sir Charles." However, the General kindly came up to me and said a few words, which naturally pleased me, and shortly afterwards I was asked to his house, and subsequently more than once. Small things in life often tell; many brother cadets who met me years afterwards remembered me by this incident, and with one, at least, began a long friendship which only ended with his death in the Soudan. The officers of the instruction staff at Sandhurst were drawn

from many regiments, and from various arms of the Service, and even though we cadets were young, and without any regimental experience, it was a good field for studying different characters. On one occasion, whilst surveying, I showed three roads instead of four at a certain point; I was severely reprimanded by my instructor, with a remark that I would never make a soldier, and had evidently mistaken my profession.

His soul could not soar above a military survey sketch. Mine was no doubt a bad error, but I had then only been learning some two months, and I lost much of my faith in the instructional staff. The news from the theatre of the Russo-Turkish War, and the heroic defence of Plevna, and other equally exciting operations then taking place, kept up our military ardour, and the year 1877 passed and January, 1878, found me gazetted as a second lieutenant in the 100th Regiment of Foot. The competitive examination again came into play, and although I passed out forty-fourth on the list, I found myself fifth out of six gazetted to this corps, a bit of sheer bad luck. It did not permanently affect my career, as I finally left the regiment before it mattered where I stood on its rolls; but it sometimes seems hard that a mark or two gained or lost should determine seniority, irrespective of other points, for the greater portion of a man's service.

In February, 1878, a large batch of us from Sandhurst sailed for India in the old troopship *Jumna*, now a thing of the past. A hammock in pandemonium was my lot, and in some respects recalled the days of my Italian experiences. The relations between the naval and military authorities on that ship were "very strained" indeed. I know not where all those in power may now be, but I remember well the life we Subalterns had to lead; our military Commanding Officer, however, was an excellent fellow, and had it not been for him, I fear most of us might have been landed in irons, if not at Malta, surely on arrival in India. However, the voyage ended, and with it began my first scrape in the Service. I reported myself at the District Staff Office in

Bombay, and in conversation was given to understand that officers on first landing were allowed thirty days in which to report themselves, if their corps were serving in the Bengal Presidency; I was anxious naturally to join my corps, which was quartered at Jullunder, in the Punjab, but thinking it a good opportunity of having a little shooting before doing so, and also believing it was quite in accordance with custom, I took my joining time of a month, leaving no address, and in due course reported myself at regimental headquarters. I felt I was in for trouble, for as soon as I entered the mess I was greeted with "Hullo! where have you come from? We joined three weeks ago. The Colonel wants to see you." In fear and trembling I entered the orderly-room next morning: the interview was short, but it was very pithy, and I explained as best I could my reasons for the delay in joining. My Commanding Officer told me off, and I left barracks glad to find I was not under arrest. That too came soon enough, but at any rate I was free for the time being.

In the summer of 1878 my regiment went through a terrible ordeal. The whole country round Jullunder was flooded, chiefly owing to the embankments built up for what was then known as the Scinde, Punjab and Delhi Railway. These massive erections ran for miles, more or less, at right angles to the flow of the main rivers from the north, and this being an exceptionally heavy rainy season, and there being a totally inadequate number of culverts and openings to let off the dammed-up waters, as a natural consequence the embankments and bridges were washed away, the country flooded, and fever and cholera raged for months.

The tablet in Jullunder church to the memory of eighty-eight men, women, and children is testimony to the debt paid by the battalion during the months of its stay in the place. But the most trying part of our time in this cantonment was the fact that, while we were being decimated by fever and cholera, we were daily witnesses of the lucky corps passing through on their way to the Afghan Campaign. Owing to the breaks in the railway, many regiments and

batteries had to halt temporarily, or at any rate were delayed at the river crossings, and we unfortunate Subalterns were wont to ride to the temporary camps, and sadly watch our more fortunate comrades bound for the front. I cannot remember a more galling thing in my service than this bitter disappointment of being so near to the frontiers and yet not allowed to go on. Sickness long drawn out was the chief and first cause, but long after sickness had gone, and we had been moved to a more healthy station, and the second Afghan War dragged on, it became clear that there was no intention of sending the 100th to add one name to its colours; and I vowed if ever I had a son, he should go into a corps whose standards were thick with battle honours; for there is no truer saying in such matters than, "To him that hath shall be given."

My first year in the Army seemed beset with perils, for hardly had I time to congratulate myself on escaping the results of overstaying my joining leave, when a circumstance occurred which led to my being placed in close arrest. An Indian hot weather and close arrest are things each bad enough in its way, but when taken in combination do not go for making a Subaltern's life a happy one. Ah me! How often have I recalled those ten days. If they did nothing more, they at least taught me one thing, which I have endeavoured to the best of my ability ever since to practise, and that is to try and do whatever you may have to do by gaining the trust and confidence of your officers and men, and not by trying to drive them in an overbearing fashion; discipline can be as severe when combined with courtesy and tact as ever it is when exercised arbitrarily and by red-book alone; and in hours of real danger, when men must be left to act by themselves, those who combine obedience with a real affection for their commander will easily surpass those who obey merely because it is their duty to do so.

At Jullunder I first learnt to play polo, a game I ever after placed first for enjoyment and health. It was in its infancy then, and ponies were still cheap; notwithstanding the

requirements of the Army in Afghanistan, eighty to one hundred rupees would buy a good animal, and even we penniless Subalterns had two or three ponies each. It was a sign of the change in the times that nearly every youngster joining the corps, instead of spending his money in less useful ways, immediately bought a polo pony and thus ensured for himself an opportunity of unsurpassed manly exercise.

The Field Battery, commanded by a sporting Major, had tent-pegging weekly, and any of us who wished were given mounts to compete; needless to say, we were always there, only too glad to get the chance. Near the station club was a large covered swimming-bath, in which three or four of us Subalterns spent a great part of the hot summer days, and this was also used by us as the spot where we could best work up our book Hindustani. It was a quaint sight to watch the old Munshee, with his spectacles and a very dirty book, seated on a chair at one end of the bathroom, whilst we swam about, every now and again emerging from the water to talk to the old man and listen to his explanations or stories of some great king who lived centuries before the world was ever created. His good temper never deserted him; he drew his pay regularly, and in consequence was quite content, while the very idea of our preferring cold water to his droning old fables was sufficient to persuade him that we were only one lot more of unintelligible white men. We bathed often and long, and we learnt seldom and little. An old Mahomedan bearer of mine, who acted generally as head servant over every household department, and was well known throughout the regiment, caused much amusement at a ceremonial parade. I had often warned him that he was never to forget to see that I put my handkerchief in my shirt cuff for parade; failure to see to this, I explained, would be a most serious matter. Finding I had on this occasion left my bungalow without it, he appeared near the saluting flagstaff, facing the Brigade drawn up in line, wildly waving the handkerchief to attract my attention. I saw the man, but as I was carrying the regimental Colour I naturally dared not even move a muscle;

he continued to wave wildly, and seeing one of the military police running for him, he boldly dashed across the parade shouting, "It is my master's handkerchief!" Nothing would stop him; he distanced the Provost and dodged the Adjutant and finally rushed straight for me, and as quickly recrossed the parade ground. It was a most amusing spectacle, and although I was admonished I could not say much to old Mahomed Khan, but he never charged a line of British bayonets again.

It was during these long summer months at Jullunder that I first had the pleasure of becoming thoroughly acquainted with the British soldier. My colour-sergeant, Preston, was indeed the father of the company. He taught me more of interior economy and, what was far more important, of the common-sense way of dealing with the men than I could have learnt in years under anyone less practical than himself. The whole company trusted him thoroughly and never disputed his word. I was only too anxious to learn, and even when I had acquired a certain familiarity with the work of a company commander I seldom found any necessity for interference, and, if I did, we generally settled matters to our mutual satisfaction. I began early to think that the link which should bind the officer and his men might easily be strengthened.

There is no one living who can more quickly discern the difference that exists between himself and his superiors than the soldier; but he will seldom, if ever, take advantage of the fact that his officer is ready to be his comrade, not in name only, but in deed. Familiarity may breed contempt in any walk of life; but call it by what name you please, it must be admitted that between those whose lives have to be lived together, whose honour is closely interwoven, and whose last resting-place may be in the same grave across the seas, there should be a close friendship, a *camaraderie*, a mutual respect which is difficult to describe in words, but is self-evident to all thinking men. I am not an Irishman, but I have served long with Irish soldiers; their faults are many, but their virtues are more. As Adjutant, years after the time

I am now writing of, I learnt to love them. I was not the ideal Adjutant of old confidential reports type; it was not in me; I never could remember by heart all the innumerable regulations and complicated movements of a very elaborate drill book, but I knew something of what I call a better book, the book of practical life, and I had learnt a good deal of that from the Irish soldier. I somehow always felt that the day would come when it would be deemed more to a man's credit to use a little common-sense off his own bat, than to be able to repeat the bayonet exercise by numbers; and that the man who could hit the target at 800 yards, no matter whether his arms and feet were exactly at this or at that angle of elevation or position, would be found a more useful soldier on the day of battle than the man who could rattle off without a mistake the firing exercises and explain the ingredients of an obsolete type of gunpowder.

In the winter of 1878–9 the regiment was transferred to Sialkote, near the Cashmere frontiers; and in the spring of '79 I had my first independent command, although it was only a small one. I marched with parties of the 9th Lancers, 72nd Highlanders, and my own regiment across country to the hill station of Dalhousie, and my chief recollection of it is one which served me as an object-lesson. A native driver had abstracted a bottle of brandy from the hospital cart and was brought before me drunk; not wishing to have him formally tried I administered a severe cut with a cane across his back, whereupon, with a wilfulness only understood by those whose lot has been cast in Eastern climes, he promptly proceeded to lie down and say he was dying. At first I thought it an excuse to get off a possible second stroke, but within a few minutes the man had really begun to collapse to all appearances. Visions of manslaughter rose before me, as I rapidly recalled similar instances of spite on the part of our Aryan brothers, and I shouted for our old friend the bhisty Gungadin with his leather bag of cold water to recall the man to his senses. I knelt down and was about to endeavour to reanimate the driver of cattle, when my trusty servant, Mahomed Khan, who had been watching

the performance, whispered in my ear, "Beat him violently, or he will surely die." A happy thought! Seizing the cane I gave the dying Jehu a very smart whack across his lower back, and was about to follow it with a second, when to my intense joy he uttered a yell, sprang to his feet, and disappeared in the long grass. He did not turn up again, but sent a polite request for his wages. I paid them.

In April I joined my brother in the Indian Medical Service, and we had a month's shooting together in the Sawalik Hills, on both sides of the Ganges, as it leaves the Himalayas. The delights of that month were somewhat marred when we found ourselves in the midst of a cholera-stricken country, for it was near Hurdwar, one of the most sacred cities of the Hindus, and during the annual fair. Our servants were nearly all taken ill, and the rivers were polluted with corpses. I never troubled in those days to filter water so long as it looked clear, and having one day selected a nice tree near a clear, running stream, as I thought far from any signs of man, I proceeded to pitch camp, and had a long drink. Imagine my horror when, half an hour later, my servant came and told me there were two cholera corpses in the stream only a hundred yards above our tents! It was quite true, and we soon moved, and, strange to say, I never felt any ill effects; but I took to boiling and filtering all our drinking water during the remainder of the trip. At last matters became so bad that nothing remained but to make a clean bolt of it, and we walked thirty-three miles in one day to Dehra Dun, through as hot an Indian sun as ever I felt in my life. My brother was himself taken very ill before we reached our destination, about midnight, without soles to our soft stalking boots, and absolutely done up. A poor ending to a shoot that began so well that on my third day out I had bagged two of the best cheetul (axis) stags I ever shot in India.

I went through my first annual General's inspection of the battalion at Sialkote. Besides spending many days in polishing up everything to catch the eye, my most vivid impressions of that solemn function are two. The General,

instead of parading us newly joined Subalterns for inspection, informed the Commanding Officer that he would like to see us ride over the Gymkhana Steeplechase course; splendid idea; we dubbed the General Officer Commanding a sportsman; and we did ride, and rode well too, and believe he gave us a good report. The other incident, I remember, was that, in calling on the General, one of my fellow-subalterns being particularly anxious to appear smart, but not being thoroughly skilled in the manipulation of his sword, tripped over that now much-abused weapon and landed on his head before the Inspecting Officer. I cannot say how many of us kept our countenances, but I did not!

In December, 1878, I had been appointed "Interpreter in Hindustani" to the battalion; this gave me an extra seventy-five rupees a month, my first rise in pay, and from that date on, almost throughout my service I have managed to draw extra allowances over and above ordinary pay of rank. This is one great advantage in the Army; if a poor man chooses to serve abroad, and having so chosen, will set himself to do, and do with all his might, whatsoever his hand findeth to do, he should be able to tide over the hard-up days.

There are many difficulties to be surmounted, but withal he may have a good time—polo, shooting, etc., and with active service now and again to help him, and moderate mess bills, even a Subaltern can last over till promotion comes his way. He may have all the sport India or other lands can provide, but the *sine quâ non* is that soldiering *must* come first, and he who lives on these principles will find he can generally push his own way, and even make his mark. Soon after being appointed interpreter I had to accompany my Commanding Officer, who was then acting as Brigadier, on a visit to Jummoo, the capital of Cashmere. The Maharajah received us most hospitably, and we were royally entertained. Not the least useful result of my having passed the higher standard examination was that in return for interpretation of His Highness's conversation, I was presented with a permanent shooting pass for Cashmere—

a document I found most useful thereafter, and by the aid of which I obtained many a day's excellent sport.

Three of us Subalterns ran grave risks of getting permanently disliked by no less important a person than our Adjutant, for one day, thinking we might test our bare-backed riding powers late after guest-night at mess, we all mounted his favourite pony, which was waiting to convey its master home, and galloped to our quarters without a fall.

The Adjutant, however, took it in good part, and said nothing about it. Our Commanding Officer also forgave us on another occasion when, at 2 a.m. on a dark night driving home in a pony cart, the joint property of us same three, we crashed into his carriage as it was about to turn into his gate; we were young, and meant no harm; I was severely knocked about, but turned up next day to ride in a jump race, which I won, so all ended well.

The first phase of the Afghan War of 1878 had ended with the signing of the Treaty of Gundamak. The wise-acres told us India would now again enjoy profound peace, and most of the regiments and batteries had returned to their cantonments, when the news of the murderous attack on our Resident, Sir Louis Cavagnari, and his brave companions at Kabul, in September, 1879, turned all eyes once more to the North-West frontiers, and again troops began to pour towards Peshawur, Kurram, and Kandahar. I had no intention this time of being left out of the campaign, and determined to get there by hook or by crook. I knew it was no good applying to my Colonel, as we were not overstocked with officers, and I had not passed my examination for promotion to Lieutenant; I had no friends at Simla, or even at Division headquarters, and in short my chances were very small, but I made up my mind to go, and that at once. "There is a tide in the affairs," even of friendless Subalterns, and the plunge I took floated me on the sea of active service, on which by good fortune and hard work I have managed to remain most of my soldiering days. Before taking any final action, however, I thought I would one more try with my Commanding Officer. The

results were as I expected. "No, you are too young"; "You are not qualified for promotion." I was very junior. "They can only reprimand me," I said to myself, as I walked to the telegraph office with a telegram in my hand addressed to one of the highest in authority at Simla. It was to no one by name, but there was the official designation big and clear, and my humble signature at the end. As I handed it over to the clerk, a young soldier, much overworked in those busy times, I almost imagined he chuckled to himself as much as to say. "You have put your foot in it this time!" I asked to be sent on service, in any capacity and on any pay or no pay. As I left the office I thought if this succeeds I shall erect a monument to my benefactor. I said nothing for two days, but during that time I unostentatiously packed what I considered an ample service kit, and also locked up my very few valuables and smart uniform (which, by the way, I never saw again), and on the third day, whilst at mess, a telegram was handed to the Colonel; every telegram during those few days I imagined must refer to my application; he looked my way, and I caught his eye, feeling sure that this time it concerned me. Joy of joys! it was an order directing me to proceed at once to the Front and report myself at Peshawur.

I never said a word about my private telegram to a soul. I was quite overcome with fond anticipations. Active service!—the pomp and circumstance of war!—no matter if I had only to drive mules or lead camels and feed the fighting line, was I not going to "cross the frontier," and see with mine own eyes the famous Khyber and the historic Jugdulluk Passes, and beyond those lay the, to me almost mythical, city of Kabul. It all seemed a dream, and the excitement of even the thoughts of being under fire stamped that evening on my memory as few others have ever been stamped since. Over and over again have I had the pleasurable order, "Proceed at once on Service to——," but none ever came up to that first; by the time I again wore Service khaki I had learnt the reality; the joy of campaigning no doubt remained and I hope ever will, but the "pomp

and panoply" can only be really thoroughly imagined once. That night I was the envied one of the Subalterns; polo ponies, traps, guns, etc., had all been disposed of before midnight, and next day with one servant, and I verily believe the smallest amount of kit ever taken on service, I reached Wazirabad, the nearest railway station in those days to Sialkote. The rail ended at Jhelum, which I reached next day, only to find myself one of some fifty officers without any means of onward conveyance to Peshawur.

The dak garris (four-wheeled lumbering conveyances drawn by two horses) were engaged for many days to come; the unfortunate Superintendent was at his wits' end and could only tell me that I might possibly get off in seven days' time, as a General, several Colonels, and other most important people, not to mention ordinary Field Officers and Captains by the score, were all booked before my arrival. The haunting fear possessed me that unless I got across the frontier before the real story of how I got my orders leaked out, I should be ordered back; and it was by no means a groundless fear either. Meantime, having no camp equipage of my own, I wandered into what appeared to be an empty tent with only a lantern as its furniture. Depositing my kit and leaving my servant to sit on it till my return, I hurried to the post office and interviewed the postmaster. "No, no, sir, impossible; you cannot get away for several days." It was not his fault, but how I longed to do him some mischief.

As I walked into the verandah my eye caught a large case of heliograph instruments carefully packed and marked, "For the First Division, very urgent, to be forwarded without delay." How I wished I were a Signalling officer. Happy thought! All is fair in war. I would try the postmaster again, so walking in with the most imposing air I could assume I asked him sharply, "Do you ever mean to send on these Heliographs? Are you aware of their urgency? You will probably hear more of this before long."

In the heated oppressive room stood three or four other officers, and I almost fancied they looked at me with a

somewhat awed expression. Who could I be?—perhaps Signalling officer to the Advanced Brigade—the man who would receive and flash the first news of the first battle; and I really began to feel quite an important person. The post-master tried to explain that the packages I referred to would be sent early next day, but I had my foot on the first rung of the ladder and I did not mean to descend. "Sir," I said almost fiercely, "if those Helios are delayed till to-morrow, the consequences may be most serious; they must go at once." I had hit him hard. I found afterwards they really were urgent and he had received orders not to delay them. To cut a long story short, I left Jhelum that night by special mail van, and the inside of that van was packed full of Helios, whilst I and my servant sat on the roof. I waved a fond adieu to my score of Captains and Field Officers and was thankful that the darkness screened me from the wrathful Colonels and General whom I had managed to leave behind. A tedious journey over roads churned into ploughed fields by the enormous volume of steady traffic caused by the advance of an Army brought me to Rawul Pindi, the headquarters of the Division, a place I particularly desired to avoid lest the eagle eye of some Staff officer might detect my presence away from my own regiment. A few hours' halt, a judicious bribe, and then on again, and now nothing to stop me till I reached Peshawur, the very threshold of the promised land. After a certain amount of persuasion, not unmixed with much vile abuse and many blows, the overworked ponies started off at a gallop and I was on my way to glory. What fate possessed my venerable driver I cannot say, but I was just going off into a sort of doze, as far as was possible when perched on top of a jolting prehistoric four-wheeler with barely sufficient room to sit down in, when I found myself suddenly hurled into space, and with a groaning, crashing noise the entire concern toppled into the ditch; driver, ponies, wheels all travelling in different directions. How we were not all killed I never understand to this day, but my first thoughts were for those precious Heliographs. They were certainly

there, but knocked to bits—lids off the boxes, five-inch mirrors reflected under the moon, and tripods mixed up in the wheel spokes. My journey seemed at an end for the time, but perseverance is a great thing.

Leaving my servant to sit again on my kit till I returned, I took the old coachman and the frightened ponies back with me to Rawul Pindi. As we wearily trudged along the four miles of road, knowing that a native prefers everything told to him to be in the form of a story, I told him of a certain great man who was once upon a time upset by an exceedingly idiotic driver, and how that driver had to pay for a very heavy consignment of Government instruments—so expensive that when he was quite old and at the point of death he found he had only paid one tenth of the whole amount, and the last thing he learnt on this earth was that his entire family had been imprisoned till the debt had been fully paid. Then having fairly frightened him *re* that driver's pension (for he himself was a Government servant) I told him how that great man pardoned the coachman and gave him a handsome present, because the coachman got a new carriage and finished his journey. The sequel of the story was that between us, and abetted by two other Government servants, who could not resist a little silver, we dragged a new four-wheeler out of the yard by a back road (it had been placed there for the use of two passengers early next morning), smuggled out a set of harness, placing our own now tattered stuff in its place, and putting in our steeds which had recovered their equilibrium, soon found ourselves back at the scene of the wreck. No help for it, the now useless Heliographs were packed on the top of the dak garry and I slept comfortably inside for the night. I found it all very difficult to explain on arrival at Peshawur, but it really was no fault of mine, and what happened afterwards I know not. A few days later I had crossed the frontiers and was beyond recall. Had I remained at Jhelum waiting my turn for a van I might have found myself back doing Subaltern-of-the-day at Sialkote—for my story by this time was known.

CHAPTER II

1879-1880

THE AFGHAN WAR—JELLALABAD—FORT BATTYE—JUGDULLUK—KABUL—BACK TO INDIA

ON 7th October, 1879, I first set foot in an enemy's country. The glorious sensation of entering the Khyber Pass and gazing up at its forbidding heights cannot easily be forgotten. Those craggy tops which had looked down on the hosts of Moslem and Hindu, which had later, in 1842, seen Pollock's avenging army marching to the relief of Jellalabad, held by the gallant Sir Robert Sale, and still more recently had witnessed yet another British Army forcing the defiles near Ali Musjid and advancing to Gundamak, appeared to me full of personal interest; for my father had been with Pollock and had taken part at the action at Tezeen, marched through the Pass of Jugdulluk and witnessed the destruction of the great bazaar at Kabul. All these names were familiar to me as a boy, for I had often heard him tell the story of the campaign of 1842; and now, thirty-six years after, it was my own good fortune to be following in his footsteps. However, there was little time for reflection, for we youngsters attached to the Transport Department had far more than enough work to do.

Before leaving Peshawur I called on the General Officer Commanding the force, Sir Robert Bright. I had known his family at home, and he very kindly got me sent on to Jellalabad as a start, otherwise I certainly should have been stopped at Ali Musjid, and been out of any fighting that took place. The confusion that existed in the Transport at that time was something that can hardly be comprehended now, when the Indian Transport forms such a perfect portion of a Field Army. I shall never forget my feelings when, on

being ordered to take over my first convoy of mules at Peshawur, I proceeded to the Transport lines and reported myself to the officer in charge. Thousands of mules, camels, donkeys, ponies, and other descriptions of four-footed beasts were picketed on a vast plain. The officers were doing all they could to evolve order out of chaos, but it was a Herculean task. Constant strings of fresh animals and carts of every description seemed to arrive from the south, and each animal had to be fed, watered, and fitted with saddlery, harness, etc, ; there appeared to an ordinary onlooker to be no sort of system. Systems cannot be evolved in a day. Officers who had never had experience with mules; Non-commissioned officers who knew absolutely nothing about animals; native drivers who found themselves placed in charge of three or four quadrupeds of which they had a holy terror; contractors whose chief object it was to make as much as they possibly could, in the shortest space of time, out of a long-suffering Government; Pathans, Sikhs, Punjabi-Mussulmans, Rajputs, Hillmen, Madrasis, Parsees, and fifty other kinds of living and moving beings, formed a very Babel. I waited for some hours before I could get the animals I was to be in charge of, and wandered about the plain. Those hours gave me my first lesson in Transport work, a duty which I was destined to perform in many subsequent campaigns. At last I had handed over to me a certain number of animals and found myself on the road to Jumrood, the first stage towards Kabul.

When well clear of Peshawur cantonments I halted my convoy and mustered the Jemadars and Dufadars (Non-commissioned officers). The chief man of these was one of the smartest rascals (as I subsequently discovered) I have ever met. He was, however, a really clever fellow, knew all the ropes, and at once assured me everything would go well so long as I thoroughly trusted him. I knew a good deal of the natives of India, and at once decided to make him the nominal chief of the gang, but at the same time never to trust him out of my sight. The first bit of information he gave me was that my private servant was an old acquaintance

of his, and was a notorious rogue. I told him I was convinced, if he was a friend of his, he must be a rogue, which temporarily rather disconcerted him; but he proceeded to offer to find me a really good man from amongst the drivers under his command. I must own he turned out to be quite right, and my factotum soon after deserted me, taking with him my few cooking pots, and the "really good man" took his place. This latter confided to me that he had gone to a railway station, somewhere near Delhi, to meet a friend of his, who was proceeding with animals for the Front to Peshawur, and that whilst he was waiting he was forcibly seized by two policemen on the platform, and on arrival of the train bundled into it, and thus, without further notice, he found himself an enlisted Government muleteer, never having seen a mule in his life before. Such stories were rife during the war, but there is no doubt in many cases men had been shipped off to the Front, much against their wishes, and his might have been a genuine case; I had no wish to make further inquiries, however, and he turned out a most valuable and honest servant. On arrival at my first camp ground I discovered that iron pegs had been omitted from my line gear, and as the ground was horribly stony I had no means of picketing the mules; in consequence I spent most of the night in wandering round the animals, rousing up sleepy drivers, and thus keeping the convoy together. I was a new hand then; ever after that I had sufficient pegs and a few to spare.

I tried in vain to get picketing pegs next morning, but failed; yet on arrival at the second day's camp I found ample new pegs, the head Jemadar, my "smartest rascal," had found them. I made no inquiries, it would have been of little use had I done so, but in reply to my query, "Where did these pegs come from?" I received his reply, given with evident self-satisfaction, "The convoy preceding us is in charge of a very careless Jemadar, who left these behind him; so to save Government loss I brought them along with me." I was already beginning to know the value of a rascal on service.

At Jellalabad my Chief was an officer of the Indian Army, who had for many years been in the Civil employ in the Madras Presidency, but being anxious to have a turn of active service, had volunteered, and been posted to the Transport Department, at that time a sort of refuge for the destitute. He was an excellent companion, but made no secret of his reasons for coming to the country, and my last recollection of him was that he managed to get safely through to Jellalabad a convoy of beer, at a time when such a luxury was almost unknown. He had his own methods for ensuring himself rest at certain periods of the day, and when he did not wish to be disturbed with letters, or other similar annoyances, he invariably used to put up a printed notice outside his tent to that effect. No one worried him at such times, for he was most generous, and always offered refreshments to any passer-by.

Moving gradually up the line of communications, I found myself at Fort Battye, a small stone-walled Post on the plain of Fatiabad. There I remained some months, being most of the time the only British officer present.

I was officially warned by those in authority not to venture far away from the Post without a strong escort, but I soon gained the confidence of the neighbouring people, and made a special friend of one Musa Khan, a Malik, and after that I frequently rode from ten to twelve miles by myself into all the adjacent valleys. My instructions were to lay in a stock of as much Indian corn or other food-stuffs as possible from local sources; and to do this properly it was absolutely necessary for me to move about, and not remain shut up in my small Fort. I was in the habit of taking money in my pocket, and personally paying for the stuff in the villages, instead of trusting to native subordinates to do so, and on no occasion did the vendors fail me in delivering it.

One day I was the guest of Musa Khan, who lived many miles away, and I rode out alone to his village. The whole country was intersected with watercourses and hedges, and

offered capital jump riding. I took as I thought the right direction, but hopelessly lost my way, and had just decided to return to Fort Battye as best I could, when I saw two armed men riding at full speed in my direction. I had a revolver, but not being at all anxious to meet the two fierce-looking ruffians, and, as I have said, being quite out of my reckonings, I thought discretion better than valour, and being mounted on a right good horse I started at full gallop across country. I was keeping easily ahead of my pursuers, when I looked round and saw one of them land head-foremost in a ditch; the other stopped, and so did I, when I heard the voice of my would-be host shouting to me. I soon rode back, and found it was he and one of his relatives who had noticed me riding in a wrong direction, and had come out to show me the road. We all laughed heartily, and the wily Pathan, looking at my Waler, remarked, "Some day we may manage to get hold of that." They are marvellous horse thieves, but Musa never got the mare. This visit was a most interesting one for me, as I saw then, for the only time, an Afghan lady without a veil over her face; it was the old Malik's daughter. After I had entered the courtyard of the small high-walled enclosure I was given a seat, and a door opened, when the girl came forward with a dish of food and placed it in front of me. I bowed my thanks and would fain have spoken, but visions of Afghan methods of sometimes treating guests tied my tongue. She came once again with water and then disappeared, and I saw her no more. She was a very good-looking girl indeed, slight, and with bright eyes. I said nothing, but my eyes involuntarily turned to the door more than once. As I was leaving Musa Khan said, "Now you know I am your friend." I tried to get him to invite me again, but never succeeded, and very shortly afterwards I left Fort Battye, and had hardly done so before the Fort was attacked by the enemy during the night, and a British officer and some men killed. A few days later old Musa Khan sent me a sheep and a message saying, "You are my friend; why did you go away? Had you stayed, etc., etc."

Whether he himself joined in the attack I never learned, but I verily believe, even though he did, he would have sent me warning had I still been there.

Lying awake at Fort Battye at nights it was always a source of great amusement to me to listen to the native sentries on duty. The Indian camp-follower is a curious creature; he is absolutely devoid of all fear as far as being shot at is concerned; he will wander beyond Fort walls or camp limits, no matter how dangerous it may be to do so; whether a night attack is expected, or even if he has seen his own comrades killed by wandering marauders, it is all the same to him; he will go beyond bounds if the spirit moves him, and in the same way he will leave the line of march and risk any danger, if it behoves him to do so. At Fort Battye it was quite impossible to stop them, and after we had been fired into several times one night from a small neighbouring hill, I gave strict orders to the sentries to fire without fail at anyone approaching, and who would not reply or give an explanation. But the Native soldier understands the camp-follower better than we do, as one of them said to me, "Sir, I know the sound of a drabi (mule driver) or kahar's foot-fall—there is no mistaking it." "But," I said, "supposing he makes no noise." "Oh!" came the quick reply, "I can tell them by the smell."

There was no arguing with so precocious a person. Night after night have I laughed at the conversation between sentries and camp-followers.

First would come the clear "Halt! who come dar?" No reply. Again the sharp challenge would ring out; perhaps no reply, perhaps a sort of mumble. Then would follow the sentry threatening to fire if he did not at once receive full and ample proofs of the approaching individual. But our apathetic follower would meantime have approached to within a few paces of the wrathful sentinel, when he would be allowed to pass under a shower of choice Billingsgate, and a threat of certain death if he ever repeated his folly.

One day the late Amir, Yakub Khan, passed through on his way to deportation in India. Great precautions to avoid

any attempt at rescue had been made, and he was escorted by a detachment of the 6th Dragoon Guards.

From Fort Battye I went on to Jugdulluk, the scene of the destruction of great part of our retreating Army in 1842. Kabul had been meantime besieged by thousands of tribesmen, and Sir Charles Gough had hurried up with a brigade to its relief. The 51st Light Infantry, and that splendid regiment the 45th Sikhs, were at Jugdulluk, or in Flying column in its vicinity. The 45th were then commanded by Colonel Armstrong, about as fine a soldier as ever stepped—"Giant" Holmes, who, later, left the service, much to the regret of every Sikh in the Punjab, and now lives in Devonshire, was one of his Subalterns—and I have never before or since met a Native corps who could surpass "Rattray's Sikhs" in anything. Dining at their hospitable mess one night, I was being chaffed for overloading my "half-starved mules" (as a matter of fact they were very well fed then). I remarked they were only asked to carry a hundred and sixty pounds, or two ordinary men's loads; whereupon I was at once offered a big bet that I would not carry half a mule load, eighty pounds, from Jugdulluk to Sei Baba, the next Post towards Kabul. The distance was over ten miles, and a very considerable and long kotal, or hill, had to be negotiated.

I took the bet, and the Sikhs gave me an escort next day. The difficulty was how to carry the load; so I started with a sack of corn, with two pounds overweight to allow for droppings. I won my bet, but my back and shoulders were raw for weeks after; however, I was able to maintain that my mules were not overloaded. The Brigade to which I was attached was commanded by Brigadier-General Arbuthnot, Royal Artillery (afterwards General Sir Charles Arbuthnot), and he was much amused.

I did not again meet him till ten years after in Mandalay, when he was Commander-in-Chief of the Madras Army, but he remembered the incident, and asked me if I still tried to save my Transport animals by carrying half their loads on my back. At Jugdulluk we never failed to take every



THE PARI DARRA OR FAIRY'S GATE JUGDULLUK

DRAWING BY LADY HELEN GRAHAM

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advantage of having a day's shooting; sesi (hill partridge) abounded, and many a hard tramp was well repaid by several brace of birds, which always proved a welcome addition to the pot. One of our amusements in those days was to ride without any kind of escort to Lutabund, the second stage towards Kabul, and back, frequently over roads covered with snow and ice, and we only stopped this foolish practice after two officers, who were riding out one day to the kotal, were fired on, and one of them killed, within a short distance of the Fort.

It was here I had my first experience of a night march; just before dark one night a message was received that Sei Baba would be attacked early next morning, and we were to send a small mobile Column to its assistance at once! We started within an hour; snow lay thick, and a biting cold wind swept the barren hills, and it was all one could do to keep up the circulation of the blood; but we floundered on, many of the Native muleteers having to be forced to keep moving, and even then we lost three or four, who perished by the roadside. We arrived before dawn, when, to our disgust, we found the enemy had changed their minds on learning that we were coming. On this and similar occasions my right-hand man was always Naik Sundar Singh of the 45th Sikhs, now Subadar (Native officer) in the 36th Sikhs. He was the best type of Sikh, and of absolutely untiring energy. We have kept up a correspondence on and off ever since. He has since been decorated with the Order of British India.

Early in 1880 I was transferred from the Khyber to Kabul, and found ample work and scope for energy. Our chief was Colonel R. C. Low (now General Sir Robert Low, G.C.B., commanding the Forces in Bombay). I was placed in charge of all the equipment of the Transport of the Field Force—a very big job, but I had a free hand, and a chief to work for whom was a genuine pleasure.

The duties were multifarious, and embraced the repairing of the saddlery and harness of the Transport of a small army corps, the manufacture of new saddlery for all local

Remounts, the purchase of leather, rope, iron, etc., and all the materials for use in the above work, and most difficult of all, the payment of enormous bills. There was a very large workshop in Sherpur cantonments where hundreds of workmen from India and many local people were employed, and altogether it formed a sort of miniature Pimlico and Woolwich Arsenal rolled into one. Night after night, when work was at high pressure, I was unable to leave the shops, but lay down to sleep on the masses of blankets and wool piled up in one of the store-rooms. My chief native assistant was Lala Dhunput Rai, a Hindu gentleman of Peshawur; he was a master-hand at everything concerning Transport and its equipment, and the hardest working and most indefatigable man you could find anywhere. I formed the highest opinion of his abilities and character, and we became good friends. His early promise did not belie him; he accompanied me years after on another campaign, and yet again when I went to Burmah, in 1885, I specially asked for, and obtained, his services. For his excellent work in that campaign he was made a "Rai Bahadur," a step in the Indian Knighthood, and later obtained the command of the Jeypur Imperial Service Transport Corps. He commanded that corps in the Tirah Campaign; represented the Indian Army at the Queen's Jubilee, and has been promoted "Sirdar Bahadur" and a Companion of the Order of the Indian Empire. I give his career, as I felt sure from the first that real worth such as his would without fail receive its recognition.

In May, Sir Donald Stewart, after inflicting a severe defeat on the enemy at Ahmed Khel, arrived in Kabul from Kandahar, and assumed the supreme command of the Northern Afghanistan Field Force. I well remember a great parade held outside Sherpur, when several thousand well-seasoned, war-worn British and Native troops, most of whom had been campaigning since the commencement of the first phase of the war, were drawn up for inspection. I doubt if ever a British force surpassed, either in appearance or physique, those splendid soldiers, and, personally,

I have never again seen so genuinely fine a body of men. Short service has, under present conditions of European armaments, become an absolute necessity; but for a campaign such as that in Afghanistan there could have been no comparison between the worth of a regiment of seasoned troops and one composed of young lads. Such specimens as made up the ranks of the 9th Lancers, 67th Foot, and 72nd and 92nd Highlanders, and others, will probably never be surpassed again in our own or any other army.

For those who had no very particular work to do, time must have hung heavily in Kabul; personally, I never found the days long enough, and the occasions were very rare when with three or four others I managed to get a few hours' snipe-shooting on the Butkhak road. Birds were numerous, and the bags generally very large. Polo was easier to indulge in, as the ground was not far from the cantonments.

Lieutenant Lugard, of the 9th Foot, was quartered with his regiment in Kabul, and it was there that a friendship began which has steadily increased as the years rolled on. Since those days Fred Lugard has served in many a campaign, been explorer, soldier, and geographer, and is now a K.C.M.G., C.B., and D.S.O., and High Commissioner of Northern Nigeria, where, with his singleheartedness of purpose, his straightforward character, and his untiring zeal, he is creating a new and splendid possession of the Crown. We served together afterwards in Central India and in the Soudan, and it was in 1897 that at his call I left India and went out to the Niger, as I shall relate later on.

Looking at my diary of 1879 recalls one or two amusing incidents of life in Sherpur. One morning, being much annoyed with a servant, I seized the first thing I could lay hands on, which was an old Snider cartridge, and threw it after him as he ran round a corner, when, to my surprise, the cartridge struck a wall and exploded. The servant ran direct to the Staff Office and reported that I had deliberately fired at him with my revolver with intent to kill him. When confronted with me he flatly denied ever having made any

such statement, and appealed to me for protection from the Staff Officer, to whom he had reported.

A story was also related to me of a camp-follower who had to be whipped for some offence, and before he received his punishment, he appealed to the Provost-Sergeant to be let off, as he was a Christian ; as his request could not be entertained on these grounds, the law took its course, and as each stroke was administered our Christian friend gave a yell and quoted some text from Scripture. As he received the twelfth and last cut he gave rather a louder howl and shrieked "Amen!"

It was a serious matter for him, but most of those present could not refrain from laughing.

In August, news reached Kabul of the disaster to our Brigade at Maiwand. What chiefly concerned us youngsters was who would be the lucky ones to accompany the relieving Force. I was informed by Colonel Low that as I had the accounts of a very large establishment to settle up, I could not possibly go, but must return to Peshawur. My bitter disappointment could not be softened even by his assurance that I should not be forgotten, and I missed this great chance! However, there was no help for it, and on my return to my regiment I had the satisfaction of receiving a copy of a letter from him to my Commanding Officer, in which he was good enough to say "that the Transport was in a position to despatch, thoroughly equipped, the Force for the relief of Kandahar at so short notice, was owing in a great measure to the excellent manner in which Lieutenant Willcocks had done his work." High praise, indeed, but it took me many years to get over the fact that notwithstanding I had honestly slaved for months at a job not very interesting in itself, I was not allowed to march "from Kabul to Kandahar."

It had previously been decided that our army should retire from Kabul to India, holding only a portion of the Khyber Pass, and negotiations were in progress with Abdur Rahman, who later became Amir of Afghanistan. Our guards in Kabul City had been withdrawn into cantonments,

and the Kotwali, and other buildings, were occupied by Afghan soldiers of sorts. Orders had been issued that officers and others were not to visit the city on any account. When it became known that 10,000 men were to march to Kandahar, *viâ* Ghuzni, I was directed to purchase for mule gear all the spare rope and other articles that I could lay hands on. As purchases from the city merchants had ceased some days previously, I saw no means of complying with the demands of regiments unless I personally went into Kabul itself.

At any rate I hoped no one would hear anything about it, and so taking my orderly, a Native Cavalry Sowar, and two mules, I proceeded to the shops I had often dealt with. As I entered the city I saw plainly that conditions had considerably changed since the withdrawal of our own soldiers. At least I had always previously met with ordinary civility, whereas now swaggering soldiers and budmashes of all sorts jeered at me, and at last a large crowd gathered round and began to abuse and menace my small party, sticks were produced, and one fellow drew a sword. The game was becoming serious, and I should probably have been killed had not a small party of armed men from the Kotwali, on hearing the uproar, come out at the double and escorted me into an enclosure. I at once sent word by one of them on horseback into Sherpur cantonments, and an escort was sent out, and I was glad to find myself safely out of the walls. I realised, however, that I had disobeyed orders and the consequences might be serious; my only consolation was I had done it in order the better to equip the Force for Kandahar, and that my fault lay in an excess of zeal. Immediately I reached my tent I received an order to report myself to Colonel Low. I learnt that I had committed a most heinous offence, and one that might have led to serious political consequences, for had I been murdered the question of punishment would have become a very complicated and awkward one, on the eve of our finally evacuating Kabul, but this was as nothing to what was to follow. I was directed to attend at the Headquarters Office, where I again met Colonel Low, and was

ushered into the presence of a still greater man. This was the very first time I ever had the honour of being spoken to by him, and after explaining what I had done, and why I had done it, I was allowed to depart. I was more than pleased that, although I had very nearly got into serious trouble, I had thereby been brought before the highest tribunal, and I could not help thinking without discredit to myself. Colonel Low too, I hoped, was not sorry to see his officers erring on the right side.

The Kandahar force left Kabul on the 8th August, and a few days later the new Amir, Abdur Rahman, arrived near Sherpur.

The retirement of the remains of the Field Army from Kabul to Peshawur began on the 11th of August, and I was on duty with the rear-guard as far as Jugdulluk, after which I hurried on by order to Jellalabad.

The day we left Kabul was one of the hardest I ever passed. I do not know exactly what orders had been issued, but I had a very large number of animals under my charge, and I found my column mixed with a struggling mass of men, carts, and animals, from another; all trying to get across one narrow bridge. The confusion in the Transport made the march appear to me more like a hurried retreat than the dignified movement of an army. Many camels and pack ponies threw their loads, and others were severely damaged, whilst a great many packages were left on the roadside. My servant, who had served me so faithfully throughout, came to me and asked if the new Amir was attacking our rear-guard, and a Hindu trader, who was taking advantage of our leaving Kabul to accompany us, and had bidden adieu to the city where he told me he had lost everything during the siege of Sherpur in December, was in abject terror, and really believed for a time that we were being driven out. Of course I only refer to the small portion of the force which I personally accompanied.

The settlement of accounts of a war, which is reported to have cost over twenty millions sterling, was prolonged for years. I can quote one instance. A year after its close



ABDUR RAHMAN, THE LATE AMIR OF AFGHANISTAN

DRAWING BY LADY HELEN GRAHAM

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I received an official letter asking me to give the approximate weight of a copper camp-kettle that had been issued to me for Transport purposes. How many Babu accountants, I wonder, had it taken to evolve the document?

On the 23rd August I recrossed the frontier and arrived at Peshawur. The Afghan Campaign was a turning-point in the history of the Indian Army. The Transport question alone, to say nothing of the many other most important matters, needed and received wholesale overhauling.

The Transport that originally went up to Kabul from India could in no way compare with that which marched with Sir Frederick Roberts from Kabul to Kandahar, and yet I doubt if the latter itself could bear any comparison with the splendid Transport Corps with which the Army in India is now furnished. The mule train detailed for Major-General Corrie Bird's column, which took the Field in 1897, in the Tochi valley on the North-West Frontier, at a time when India was enjoying one of its temporary lulls, was probably as near perfection as it is possible to get any animal transport, and as I watched the workmanlike manner in which Troop on Troop marched into Bunnoo, in June and July, 1897, I could not but see the giant improvements which had been effected since the days when I took over my first convoy at Peshawur in 1879. I was no longer doing Transport work in 1897, but was serving as Assistant Adjutant-General of the Force, and hence could look without any kind of partiality on what I saw.

CHAPTER III

1881–1882

OPERATIONS IN WAZIRISTAN—KOHAT—TONK—KANIGURAM—UMBALLA —SPORT IN ASSAM—UMBALLA

FOUR months in Peshawur passed very pleasantly. As far as Transport duty was concerned my only complaint was that there was little or nothing to do except to attend the sale of surplus and worn-out animals. I managed one day to purchase a good-looking black mare from a dealer for which I gave seventy rupees, and having won a small race at a Gymkhana meeting sold her for seven hundred rupees immediately after, a bit of good luck which established me temporarily as a judge of horse-flesh among the younger ones of my acquaintance. Early in 1881 I was transferred to Jhelum in the Punjab, and in April was again ordered with the Transport on active service. This time it was against the Mahsud Waziris, a most truculent race inhabiting the country west of Bunnoo and Dera Ismael Khan beyond our old Punjab Frontiers. The whole Force was to be commanded by Brigadier-General T. G. Kennedy, C.B., then commanding the Punjab Frontier Force, and he was also personally in command of No. 1 Column; whilst a second Column under Brigadier-General J. J. H. Gordon, C.B. (now General Sir John Gordon, K.C.B.), was to move by a different route, both forces meeting in the heart of the Waziri country. I was posted to General Kennedy's column. Hard fighting was expected, as in 1860 these tribes made a good stand against us and have always been a most self-satisfied people. How many expeditions of different sorts have been sent against the Waziris it would probably be difficult to say; but one thing is certain, that to this day they are a thorn in the side of the Government.

Indian frontier expeditions frequently furnish only as

much fighting as we intend they should; there are exceptions when the tribes will fight hard and long and must be subdued by force alone, but in the case of the Waziris and some others they will only fight if followed into the heart of their difficult and mountainous country and thus brought to bay. They are still to-day attacking posts and escorts, carrying off loot and harmless British subjects, and when troops are sent against them they retire into their impossible hills, only making a semblance of a fight, and wait till we choose to recross our frontiers; then they begin the same thing over again. I have served in two Waziri expeditions now, with an interval of sixteen years between, and in both this was more or less the case. Had they then been forced to fight we should have had our money's worth[1] and given them the punishment they so richly deserved.

In April I found myself once again in Peshawur with orders to leave for Waziristan in a few days, with a very large train of mules and dooly (ambulance) bearers, nearly all of which I had to take over from the troops lately forming the Afghanistan Field Force, and which were still maintained on a war footing in the Khyber, Kurram and Peshawur. The first thing I found was that nearly all the Non-commissioned officers, drivers and bearers, numbering some one thousand five hundred, were time-expired, *i.e.* they had been engaged for the duration of the Afghan War only, and were most unwilling to serve in another campaign, especially away from the limits of what they considered Afghan territory proper.

In order to reach Tonk, our Base of operations, it was necessary we should march along the Punjab Frontier through Kohat, Edwardsbad (Bunnoo) and Pezu, a total distance of 193 miles. The hot weather had set in and the men were much in arrears of pay, and were looking forward to being discharged and allowed to return to their homes. I knew a great many of the Transport Non-commissioned officers and men personally; we had served together for months in Afghanistan and they trusted

[1] This was written before the 1902 expedition ended.

me thoroughly, and fortunately I had an excellent British N.C.O. of the 10th Hussars to assist me; but after holding several parades and using every endeavour in my power to explain matters to all ranks, I plainly saw that the task before me was a most difficult one, as to every explanation of mine I only received the reply, "The Sirkar (Government) promised we should be allowed to go at the end of the Afghan War, and why does it now force us to go on service again? We do not want our arrears of pay, we want nothing, we only ask leave to return to our homes."

The night before I was supposed to start on my journey, I pitched my tent amongst the men, and was up till long after midnight going round to see that all was well. I had a foreboding that something serious would occur and I had warned the authorities at Peshawur; but my distinct orders were to start, so there was nothing to be done but obey.

At three a.m. I was roused by my orderly, who informed me that many of the drivers and bearers had deserted and taken away the head and heel ropes of the animals. I soon had evidence of this as mules began galloping wildly about, and before many minutes my tent ropes were pulled up and my humble abode was flat on the ground. The confusion that followed beggars description, and it was not till midday that with the help of an escort, order was in some measure restored. A telegram was sent to Simla and in reply I was authorised to make certain promises; this was done and the escort was increased very considerably, and after a further delay I eventually started. But mutiny in a seething form is a most difficult thing to stifle, especially when (as in this case) the men have a real grievance, according to their own lights, and are not legally enlisted servants of the State.

At Kohat I had to pick up another big batch of animals and ambulance bearers, making a total of over two thousand mules, etc., and some thousand Native Non-commissioned officers and men. Under any circumstances such a convoy is no easy matter to manage, but when the temper of the men is taken into consideration it will be readily understood that I felt a great responsibility, especially as I was well

aware that without this Transport the Columns could not be equipped at the Base. I had no intention, however, of asking for any extra help, as being a very junior officer someone senior to me might have been sent, when he would of course have taken the responsibility and I should have become a mere cypher.

A good many desertions occurred outside Peshawur, but otherwise all went fairly well and I hoped matters would soon be all right.

The storm burst, however, sooner than I expected, and one evening as I was sitting down to my meal I saw an angry crowd come surging towards my tent; it was headed by one of the senior N.C.O.'s, armed with a long latee (stick). Instantly seizing my revolver which I had kept carefully loaded since leaving Peshawur, I placed it by my side, and assuming as far as I could an air of indifference I waited. The Jemadar was decidedly the worse for liquor (albeit he was supposed to be a very strict Mussulman), and reeling up to within a couple of yards of me demanded in loud tones that I should pay up and dismiss all the drivers, etc.; I rose from my chair. The crowd surged backwards, but as I walked forward again collected round me; I jumped up on a mule cart which stood outside my tent and only just in time, for I saw that they now meant mischief; however I called out that I would fire into the crowd unless they at once dispersed, and they knew I meant it. No need to prolong the story, they did disperse, and I spent a wakeful night with my servant. At dawn the whole camp was mustered and I went down the ranks. Mutiny can only be dealt with summarily, and so I reduced nearly all the old Non-commissioned officers who were permanent Government servants entitled to pensions, and entered it in their service books. I then proceeded to promote in their places such young hands as I had noted doing their duty, and I administered to a certain number of N.C.O.'s and men alike, irrespective of rank, a sound flogging. Never a man moved during the whole of this performance, which I attribute chiefly to the cool behaviour of my 10th Hussar Sergeant

who watched for the slightest signs of insubordination and would have knocked the first man down who showed it. I had no further trouble and took all my convoy safely into Tonk.

In dealing with conquered races there can be no sort of doubt that the worst possible thing is to give them any shadow of an idea that you mean to break faith with them. To the ordinary native of India, the Sirkar (Government) is something that is the personification of honesty and truthfulness. The Sirkar's word he considers inviolable, and cannot comprehend how it should ever have any other meaning. In this particular case, looking at it in the light of ordinary dealing between master and servant, the Government were not so much to blame; they found themselves face to face with a serious difficulty in an unexpected quarter, most of the Army Transport was still away on the Kandahar side, and, in fact, the only available Transport was at or near Peshawur or Kohat. But the native cannot argue on our lines of thought; it was sufficient for him to realise that something different to what he had been promised, and what he believed certain, was about to happen, and he tried to take the law into his own hands. The Indian Transport muleteer and the kahar (ambulance bearer) are probably the most faithful and patient adjuncts to an army that the world can produce. After many years spent with them on service I can confidently assert the truth of the above statement; but let them once think that the Government means to break faith with them, and the keystone of their discipline vanishes. This is even more the case with black races. I have twice seen good and loyal soldiers in West Africa suddenly break over all the bonds of discipline because they firmly believed the white man meant deliberately to deceive them; then the officer who had till that time been held to be a Fetish, a Juju, a god, suddenly became an ordinary mortal, and the spell of his natural power was gone. At any cost it is better to keep one's promises, and to give such men the option of choosing, when at least some, nay, often many, will voluntarily remain and see the job

through. It is one of the dangers which underlies dependence on all dark races, viz. that at any sacrifice you must be prepared to keep your word, once given, even though it may lead to serious consequences.

Number one column of the Field Force, under General Kennedy's command, consisted of twelve guns, three hundred sabres, three thousand seven hundred infantry, and a company of Bengal Sappers and Miners, and was composed entirely of Native troops, all belonging to the Punjab Frontier Force, with the exception of the Sappers and the 32nd Punjab Pioneers. Number two, or General Gordon's column, was made up of eight guns, three hundred Sabres, and about three thousand four hundred Infantry, including a British Mountain Battery and the 4th Battalion Rifle Brigade.

General Kennedy left the Base at Tonk on 18th April, and the force halted at Zam, where several of the leading Waziri Chiefs came in and surrendered. This acceptance of surrenders made only after our troops have actually taken the Field at immense expense, and immediately they have been put into motion, is a policy I do not understand, nor is it for me to comment upon it. Suffice it to say that many years after, when the day came that I personally had command of a Force, I informed Chiefs and others who had committed every sort of iniquity, but offered to submit when defeat stared them in the face, that it was then too late, and they might fight or run away, as they chose, but it had got beyond the question of pardon. The fiat, however, may have gone forth that the punishment of the Mahsuds on this occasion was to be of the gentle type, and yet even with that there were found some sections who preferred to fight rather than be coerced, and there were few in the British camp who did not drink a bumper to these, and ill-luck to their faint-hearted compatriots.

On the 25th April we had the satisfaction of knowing that we should not have a walk-over, and no fun for our money, as our rear-guard was fired on when leaving the camp at Kajuri Kach. This firing on the Column in places where it

first night that this had been the case. However, he began to use strong language, and so not being in a particularly good humour, I told him in a few words that he might find more useful work in another part of the camp. I was to have had all sorts of things happen to me, but nothing came of it.

Whilst crossing a stream one morning a sowar of a Native Cavalry regiment who was just ahead of me was thrown by his horse slipping on a boulder and coming down; he seized the animal, and after striking it violently on the head with a stone, deliberately gave it several gouges with his spur in the knee, causing blood to flow. Needless to say, I had him severely punished. It is strange how natives of India will sometimes in anger ill-treat animals; I once saw a Transport driver carefully washing and dressing a wound on a mule; suddenly the animal shifted and upset the bucket of water which was being used; the brutal man struck the mule a blow with a stone in the eye, which at once blinded it. He promptly received a flogging in my presence.

In the Afghan Campaign everything had been done on a very big scale. The war had lasted over two years, and convoy and other duties on the line of communication, or even in Kabul itself, had become monotonous once fighting had ceased; but in this, my first minor Frontier expedition, whilst it lasted we were daily on the move, in fact, both forces were really Flying columns moving *en masse* into the enemy's country, and having no lines or means of communication with the Base. Each day's march took us further from the fiery, hot, and dusty plains of the Punjab, and into the mountains, where at least we could get a cool breath of air and cold nights. Our track was the bed of a clear stream, and all around were the everlasting mountains, whilst every turn brought into view some new scene, some moving panorama. Now you pass a few deserted huts, hurriedly evacuated by their owners; an old mill-wheel seems to look reproachfully at you, a half-starved dog snarls and you unconsciously edge away from him; then on again

and a peak covered with snow appears in the far distance. Wondrous land! half paradise, half inferno, inhabited by Nature's children, tilled and watered as in the days of Abraham, the scene of much bloodshed, but yet not altogether without its own rude chivalry. A poet would love to linger by those crystal waters; a painter might find fifty subjects for his brush in a single day, and yet neither poet nor painter can have any place in that long drawn out column of men and beasts, toiling upward with a far different object.

Often and often did I fall into thought as I saw the sun rise and sink during the same day's long march, and more than once were such peaceful thoughts suddenly dispelled by the prosaic crack of a rifle, or the resounding echoes of some distant volley. Then poetry vanished like a dream, and dull reality resumed its sway.

So many, abler than I am to judge, have written of the Native Army of India that I feel a diffidence in adding anything, but at least I have always had one advantage in that I know the language and the people as only those who know them young can do. I had, in many ways, the disadvantage of being left in India as a boy, but I was sent home just young enough to gain most of the advantages of an English education and school life. The knowledge of the language, however, has always stood me in good stead, and I was thus even as a Second Lieutenant able thoroughly to understand Native soldiers and their ways. It was not long before I was convinced that the better classes of Indian troops are not to be surpassed by any. Given sufficient officers the native soldiers of the Army of India, if not allowed to rust too long in the same part of the country, will prove themselves fit to fight in the first line in any war. What could exceed the devoted gallantry of our British troops in South Africa? but I doubt not that if ever such a strain comes on our empire again, and the Indian Army is called on to share in it, the deeds performed in the Transvaal, Natal, and Orange River Colonies will be emulated by the Sikh, Gurkha, Punjab-Mahomedan, Dogra, Rajput,

Jat, and others of those fine martial races which compose the King's army in Hindustan.

On the general break up of the vast masses of Transport which had been raised for the Afghan War I returned to my regiment, which had meantime been transferred to Umballa, and I was given the appointment of acting Adjutant with the half-battalion, the headquarters being at Solon, near Simla.

At Umballa I again met the 9th Queen's Royal Lancers, and as many of their officers were away on leave, they were good enough to give me a place in their regimental game of polo whenever they wanted an extra hand. To play polo with the 9th was an education hard to get in those days, and whatever I know of the game is due to them. Gough, Chisholm (who fell at Elandslaagte), Cameron, Little, Jenner, and others—all well-known polo players—were amongst those from whom it was my good fortune to learn this—the finest of games.

In the spring of 1882 I obtained three months' (Afghan War) leave, and started on a shooting expedition to Assam. That country was not then known as it is now, and communications were in rather a primitive state, and it was in fact for these very reasons that I elected to go there; my imagination had been fired in the days of my solitude whilst commanding the Post at Fort Battye by reading shikar stories in the *Asian* sporting newspaper, and although I knew nothing of the country, nor, indeed, a soul in it, I started with a double 12-bore rifle, a 12-bore shot gun which fired ball, a double ·500 express by Holland and Holland, and sufficient fishing tackle for the trip. To get to Assam in those days it was necessary to travel *viâ* Calcutta, and by the Eastern Bengal Railway to Kaunia, whence a combination of narrow-gauge railways, trolleys, and small steamers landed you eventually at Dhubri, on the River Brahmaputra, where you were in Assam proper. Nowadays a daily mail-boat leaves Dhubri, both up and down the river, and travelling is easy, but at the time I am writing of there were no small steamers, and passengers for

the Brahmaputra valley had to travel by the large tea-boats, which were not only irregular in their timing, but frequently stuck on sandbanks, or were delayed for days by the requirements of the tea-gardens and the loading and unloading of cargo. The pace also was very slow, as generally many laden tenders were attached.

Life on these old steamers was, however, very pleasant, and the time occupied in the journey passed very agreeably. I had no kind of idea where I should land, or, having landed, how I should set about getting any sport. The River Brahmaputra must be seen by those who wish to appreciate the apparent hopelessness of making a start anywhere from its banks. A vast sea of water lazily rolling on towards the ocean, hundreds of islands and sandbanks dotted over its surface, and as far as the eye can reach the banks covered with impenetrable, twenty to thirty foot high elephant grass. Great eddies and whirlpools everywhere, alligators basking in the sun on every open patch of sand; now and again a herd of buffalo, just visible on some low grass mounds away in the far distance;—all these sights make a weird picture, fascinating to the lover of nature, even though it is nature in its most unpleasant mood.

Years afterwards, in West Africa, when ascending the Niger north of the sixth parallel, I could not but be reminded of the similarity of the scene, although on a smaller scale, for the volume of water cannot be compared to the Brahmaputra in flood. "Where are you going to land?" inquired a fellow-passenger—a veteran tea-planter who knew most things worth knowing about Assam. "Haven't the slightest idea," was all I could say, and so we got into conversation, and my spirits did not rise as he told me it was hopeless to attempt shooting in this way. However, I was going to have a try, and a few days after leaving Dhubri I bundled my belongings ashore at a place called Mungledye, and the boat steamed away. Robinson Crusoe on his island could not have felt more lonely. There was only one European and a few natives on the beach when I landed, and even these soon disappeared, leaving me and my servant the sole occupants of the port.

Shouldering my rifle and leaving my kit to take care of itself, I started for the Civil Station, which I was told was a few miles distant, and *en route* fortunately fell in with a planter, who gave me a lift in his cart. The track lay through vast seas of the tallest, rankest grass I had ever seen, and the more I saw of it the more I recognised how hopeless it was to attempt shooting on foot; but luck was in store for me.

On arrival I called on Mr. A. J. Primrose, Indian Civil Service, Deputy Commissioner, who offered me a bed and dinner, and I soon found myself comfortably installed. It was my good fortune soon after to spend many months with him at Munipore, when he was Political Agent there in 1886, as I shall tell later. Primrose was not only the most hospitable of men, but the keenest of sportsmen, and before I had been an hour in the house he had arranged a fifteen days' trip for me. He had only just returned from a shoot himself, and had two elephants with howdahs, which belonged to a small local Raja; these he placed at my disposal, and two days later I had started on my first big game shooting expedition.

Shall I ever forget the pleasing sensation of finding myself the master of two elephants, all my belongings borne aloft above the trackless ocean of grass and occasional forest, and fifteen days ahead of me to go where I pleased. No letters! no telegrams! nothing to worry one, and glorious sport all round. My first night I passed near a small village by the side of a bheel, the Assam equivalent for the Indian jheel or swamp. Duck and snipe were plentiful, and I got a shot at a swamp deer. The natives were much amused at my *tente d'abri*, for it was the only tent I had with me, and even that I only used in case of rain; they had been accustomed to seeing the sahib logue (white officers) moving with a considerable amount of camp equipage. I had no bed, but slept on the rushes and dry grass —a dangerous practice, which I gave up after this trip.

My third day out was to prove one of the most exciting I ever spent in the jungles. I had been warned that there



THE ASSAM BUFFALO

DRAWING BY LADY HELEN GRAHAM

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were rhinoceros close to the camp, and I felt sure this must be the case, as my mahout (elephant driver) was in a state of semi-intoxication when I climbed into my howdah.

I soon discovered that, although a good man on ordinary occasions, my friend had no relish for rhino shooting, and when such was ahead he was obliged to imbibe large potions of opium to give him Dutch courage. The elephant I was mounted on was a mukna, *i.e.* a tuskless male, a staunch shikaree, but very bad-tempered, and on the advice of Primrose I kept the second elephant close to me, so that in case my own should become intractable I could change on to the other.

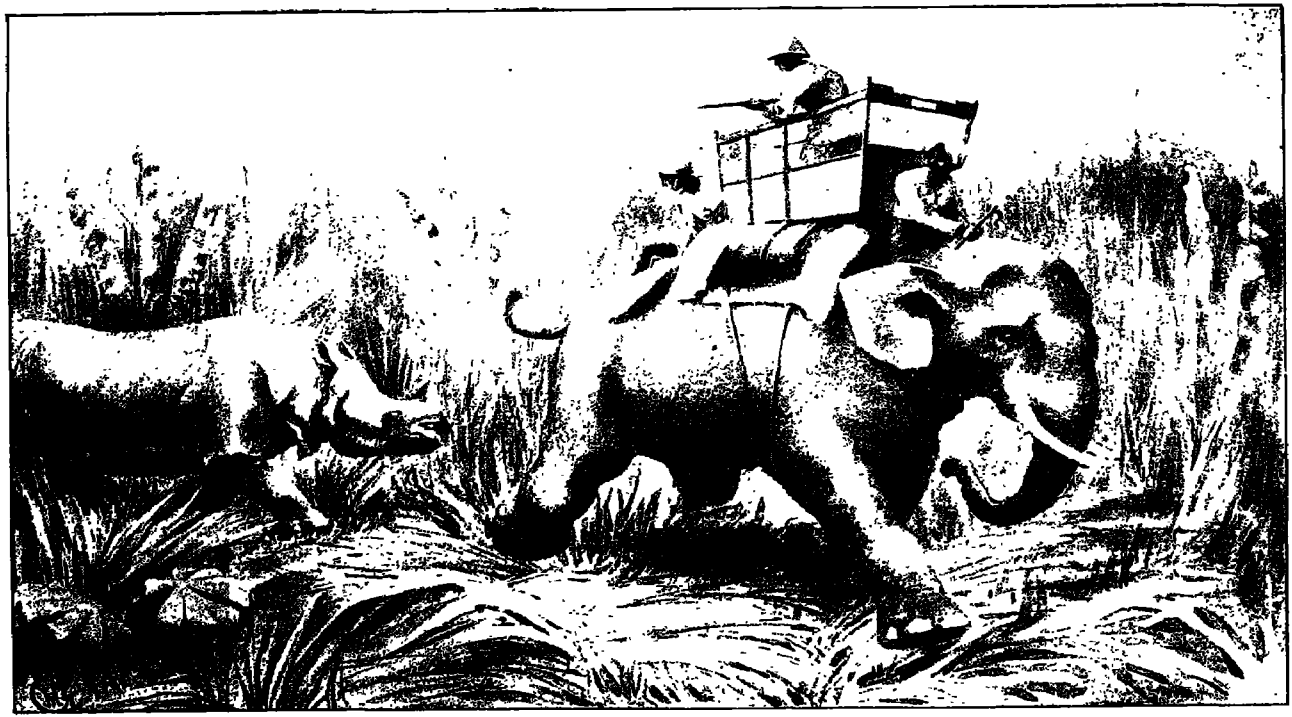
We soon found ourselves on the fresh tracks of a rhino and followed it up. Lilpoo, the mahout, I noticed would keep trying to get off the track, which was more than annoying, and I had at last to threaten him with a thrashing if he showed such abject fright; this had some effect and cautiously he moved on. Presently I spotted a great black mass only fifteen yards ahead of me, and into it I fired two barrels; in an instant Lilpoo had turned the elephant and we were literally galloping in an opposite direction. I shouted to him to stop, but finding my efforts of no avail, I gave him a gentle box on the ear, which had the desired effect and he pulled up, and once again we turned towards the rhino. We followed him up and came on blood, and almost at the same moment saw his head and caught his small eyes fixed on us. Bang! bang! went two more barrels from my 12-bore followed by a rushing mass, which passed within a few yards. Reloading quickly, and before he was out of sight, I fired two more shots. Surely, I thought, he must be down now; but no! he crashed on, and only after a big glass of whisky could I get Lilpoo to make headway again in his direction. Swaying this way and that, and after fully two hours of tracking, I saw the grass moving a few yards ahead, and instantaneously the wounded rhino charged down on us; there was no time to turn, nor would the elephant have done so, as it had now become a question of self-defence. The furious beast came crash into the mukna, and he in turn

quickly lowered his head, almost throwing me out of the howdah; the rhino seized him under the soft flesh of the neck and at the same moment I pulled both triggers, the muzzle of the rifle almost touching the beast's spine. In the confusion it is impossible to recall all the incidents, but immediately the rhino rolled over and the elephant, finding himself free, turned again to run. Having reloaded once more I heard a noise, and the rhino, having recovered himself, and mad with pain and rage, was after us at his fullest speed. Emptying both barrels as quick as I could under the circumstances I held on, as I now found one of the girth ropes of the howdah had snapped. Ten minutes' headlong going and we reached an open bit of ground, and knowing it was hopeless to expect Lilpoo (who was shaking with fear by this time) to face the foe again, I dismounted, adjusted the gear, and got on to the second elephant.

I had only just done so when the rhino, which certainly was the most persistent animal I ever shot, emerged from the high grass from which it had been watching our proceedings, and all was at once confusion again.

I fired in all, I think, fourteen bullets, eleven of which struck him, and as evening was coming on, and neither mahout would venture into the high grass again, I gave up the chase. At dawn next morning I got the news that the rhino was lying dead within a quarter of a mile of our camp. My joy was unbounded, I had killed my first big beast; and his horn set up as a snuff-box is now the property of the Officers' Mess of my regiment.

The moral of the tale is that it is cruelty firing at random into big animals, especially with inferior weapons, such as my 12-bore was. I was a young shikaree then, and in heavy grass it is frequently impossible to know what part of an animal you are firing at. The remedy is to use heavy rifles. I have for years now used a double 8-bore, carrying 12 drachms of powder. The argument, I am aware, is an old one, and such experienced hunters as Mr. Selous will convince sportsmen, as no humble person like myself can ever hope to do; but at least



MY FIRST RHINOCEROS

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I have on my side such a world-famed shikaree as the late Mr. Sanderson, whose *Thirteen Years amongst the Wild Beasts of India* is too well known to need quotation. I have carried my 8-bore in every sort of country and clime, and ·303 notwithstanding, shall always use it for such game as elephants, rhino, and buffalo. A few days later I bagged my first bison (gaur), and also a leopard, which I came on suddenly in a small open swamp; I think it must have been asleep, as I managed to shoot it whilst just rising from a lying-down position. Both the latter I killed with my ·500 Holland and Holland, which was a far superior weapon to a 12-bore rifle.

At Tezpore I crossed to the south bank of the Brahmaputra, and fell in with Captain Lamb of the South Lancashire Regiment, whose father was then serving in the Assam Commission, and from whom I received many kindnesses.

Lamb was one of the best shots in the Army, and though we only added a buffalo or two to the bag, we had some good mahseer fishing.

I was very sorry to leave Assam, but made up my mind to return again later on, little thinking that I should one day be quartered there on duty, with fifty elephants at my command, and a perfect country to shoot over.

The Umballa division was then commanded by Lieutenant-General W. T. Hughes, C.B., and I had the honour of being selected in August, 1882, to act as Brigade-Major, for four months; this was a great rise and an opportunity for learning Staff work which I little expected. As it was the non-drill season, I spent most of my time in the office, and as an instance of how even an Indian summer's day on an office stool may have its comical side, I must relate how one day I was very much taken unawares in a most awkward situation. I had been asked to take part in some theatricals, in which I was to figure as an old man with a long grey beard. I had written to Calcutta for the appendage to my chin, and it had just arrived by post. When I opened the parcel, as there was no one in the office, I proceeded to put on the beard, and taking

a hasty look in a small mirror which hung on the wall, I came to the conclusion that no one could detect me. I was about to replace the article in its case, when to my astonishment the door opened, and I saw before me a very smart and erect soldier—a Colonel and a V.C.—who had just arrived from Simla, on his way to Bombay. He ascertained that a young Subaltern was acting as Brigade-Major, and almost seemed to start as he beheld instead of a youngster an old grey-beard. However, suppressing his evident mirth, he asked if I was Lieutenant Willcocks. I said "Yes," but was so puzzled I still stuck to the beard, and as he bent down to write his name in the report book, I quickly removed the hideous thing and put it in my drawer. Having signed his name the Colonel looked up and fairly jumped to find in front of him no veteran grey-beard, but a very confused-looking youth. We both laughed heartily when I explained the matter.

Whilst I was acting as Brigade-Major the Assistant Quartermaster-General of the Division was sent away on duty, and I was appointed to act for him. As a Lieutenant to hold such a high appointment, even for a short time, was to me a surprise, and I was proud to think that the General so thoroughly trusted me.

In November, 1882, Lord Ripon, who was then Viceroy of India, opened the Sirhind Canal, which starts from Rupar, on the River Sutlej. There was a great gathering of Punjab chiefs, including the Maharaja of Patiala, the Rajas of Jhind and Nabah, and the Nawab of Maler Kotla. A vast camp was pitched at Rupar, where the Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab entertained a large number of guests.

As befitted such an occasion, a strong military detachment, consisting of British and Native Cavalry, Horse Artillery, British Infantry (half of my own regiment), and Punjab Infantry was detailed from the Umballa garrison to form the Viceroy's escort, and the General was pleased to appoint me Brigade-Major to the force. The duties were, of course, mostly ceremonial ones—detailing Guards of Honour,

arranging for salutes, etc., etc.; but it was by no means a sinecure, for Native Chiefs are careful of guarding their prerogatives, and owing to their constant visits to the Viceroy or the Lieutenant-Governor, and the return visits, it was a constant rush to have guards and guns ready. I remember having to double a guard from one camp over to another in order to have it in time for some Highness's arrival. It was a most pleasant outing, and all ranks were royally entertained. The public mess tent was the largest canvas roof I ever saw, and had at one time been the circus tent of a British Cavalry regiment. There were several military bands, and dancing and other amusements generally closed the day's proceedings. It gave me a great opportunity for making some new friends, amongst them the late Lord William Beresford, who ever after showed me, as he did many others, the greatest kindness. My first interview with him I well remember; I had detailed and personally posted an Officer's guard at the Viceroy's tent prior to his arrival: Lord William, who had an eagle eye for all that pertained to His Excellency's surroundings, having visited the guard tent to see that all was well, went off to his own quarters; immediately after, the officer with the Punjab Government responsible for the military arrangements came round and told me that the Viceroy did not require an officer with his guard, and he might consequently be allowed to go. I had no intention, however, of letting him go till I had seen Lord William, for I felt convinced that an officer should be there under any circumstances.

A few minutes after the Guard had to turn out, and Lord William happening to pass by, I went up to him. "Officer, of course there must be an officer. You listen to nobody but me, my boy, and you'll be all right."

I had no hesitation after that in always going straight to him, as there were innumerable details to be observed, which were not to be found in the red-books. Although surrounded by inquirers, and worried by fifty different things all at once, I never knew him get annoyed, so long as he knew you were on business bent and had something

urgent to ask. No man ever received a gratuitous incivility at the hands of Lord William, and how many are there to-day who owe much to him?

One of my most pleasant duties in Umballa was the command of a survey party for mapping the Jumna River from where it left the Himalayas down to the limits of the military district; we were several weeks at work, and what with topography and shooting had a right good time. One day, being within a twenty-mile ride of the cantonments, I rode in and dined at the mess, and having to commence work early next morning, I started on the return journey after a game of billiards.

I had not had much sleep the previous night, and was in consequence tired, and fell asleep whilst cantering along the grand trunk road, and was awakened by finding myself and pony rolling down an embankment; the reins snapped, and the pony galloped off to camp, leaving me to trudge some five weary miles on foot with a sprained wrist and a very sore shoulder. Thus ended my night's outing.

CHAPTER IV

1883-1884

LUCKNOW—TRANSPORT OFFICER IN ASSAM—GOLAGHAT—ORDERED TO SUAKIN—LAHORE

IN February, 1883, I obtained nine months' leave to England, and was ordered to take time-expired men to Bombay for the old trooper *Crocodile*.

The night of leaving Umballa a terrific rain and hail storm came on whilst we were waiting for the troop train, and an incident occurred which I relate as showing how the British soldier never resents summary punishment in any form so long as it is deserved.

A Private of a certain regiment, unfortunately for himself, had done himself not wisely but too well in the canteen when bidding good-bye to his friends. On the platform the violent wind had extinguished most of the lamps, and the confusion was great. Whilst endeavouring to find my traps and those awful official papers, with which every unfortunate officer in charge of details was burdened, I had a hand placed on my shoulder, and looking round found my inebriated friend using some very strong language, which he followed up by a push which nearly upset me over one of my boxes. I saw he was not quite sober, but still sober enough to understand plain English, and thinking he had mistaken me for somebody else, I told him roughly that I was his Commanding Officer, and he had better be off. The man, however, thinking himself safe under the circumstances, said he knew well I was an officer, and at the same time shoved me. I was young, and Queen's Regulations were not framed to meet such cases as this, nor had I any desire to be detained in India after the sailing of the good ship *Crocodile* to give evidence before a court-martial; nor, indeed, was I at all anxious to have my temporarily irre-

sponsible Private put in prison; so rapidly reviewing (or perhaps not reviewing) these things in my mind, and knowing that darkness hid us from view, I proceeded to deal with him summarily. On arrival of the train he was roughly jostled into it, and when we drew up next morning at coffee hour at Gaziabad railway station, a sorry-looking Private and his Commanding Officer stood face to face on the platform; but both knew what had happened; and though neither of us nor any of the men said anything, that I ever heard, when we disembarked at Portsmouth the man fell in with the draft of my own regiment, some of whom presented me with a gold ring, as a "token of respect" in memory of the voyage. I have never forgotten that, and we parted very good friends.

I returned to India in December, 1883, in the Hall liner *Speke Hall*, which shortly after foundered in the Indian Ocean with nearly all hands. I mention this as, curiously enough, I have sailed in many vessels which have since been totally wrecked. The last one was the *Dacca*, of the British India Line, which foundered in the Red Sea near the Dædalus Rock

In 1884 I was offered, and accepted, an appointment in the newly-formed Army Transport Department in India, into which officers from British regiments were admitted. The Chief then was the present Sir Robert Low, commanding the Bombay Forces, and from him I have received very many kindnesses at different times.

I was first posted to Lucknow. The hot weather months passed in this historic place were most pleasant ones, as, in addition to my own interesting work, there was daily boating on the Goomtee, which at this time of the year is very weedy; still it gave one an excellent opportunity for exercise, and we played polo twice a week; but above all it was the scene of the great achievement of Havelock and Outram, Colin Campbell and Lawrence—it was, in fact, a spot hallowed by the names of England's greatest sons, and every day passed in going over the world-famed Residency, the Alum Bagh, and other equally well-known places, sent one home a better

man, resolved to try in one's own humble life to carry out the epitaph on Sir Henry Lawrence's tomb, "He tried to do his duty."

From Lucknow I went to Morar, near Gwalior, which was later given up as a British cantonment, and handed over to the Maharaja Scindia in exchange for the fort at Jhansi. My most interesting work at Morar was to move about the country purchasing mules for the Transport and Mountain Batteries. I made Agra the chief purchasing depôt, and was so fortunate as to have for my assistant Captain Fred Lugard, of the Norfolk Regiment. Many were the happy days we spent together, often working till late into the night inspecting and branding animals brought in for sale. We went together to the horse fair at Batesar, near Shekoabad, on the East India Railway, and it was here I had my first ride on a camel. The owner, to display its speed, broke into a gallop, and we found ourselves unwillingly scouring the plain; the animal eventually pulled up near a dyke, and I was thankful to find myself alive.

My assistant of Morar days, years after became my Commanding Officer on the Niger; but it is an honour to work in any capacity with such men, and when I first received the offer by telegram from the War Office, I remember saying to a brother Staff-officer, "Seniority and juniority play no part in the lives of men like Lugard."

In pig-sticking, tiger-shooting, and many other forms of sport I have ridden by him and shot with him, and you must ride to keep near Lugard when the boar is in front, but he is more pleased than yourself if by good riding or shooting you can outwit him.

Whilst at Morar I was offered, and gladly accepted, the appointment of officer in charge of the Army Transport on the Eastern Frontier districts of India. Headquarters were at Golaghat, in the heart of Assam, and some twenty miles off the River Brahmaputra, on the road leading to the Naga Hills and thence to Munipore and Burmah. The very idea of being quartered in the midst of the finest shooting grounds in India, with fifty elephants at my command, was

sufficient compensation for the loss of companions and every form of amusement; then again the work I knew was heavy, and entailed long rides of from sixty to a hundred miles a day, but that in itself was an extra inducement to go; and finally, there was a freedom from red tape, that terrible bugbear which destroys initiative and damps ardour. It was a glorious prospect, and I felt I had got the one billet in the Service, at that time of life, that I should have most desired. Besides, on the frontiers of India there are always chances of active service, and I seldom enjoyed a journey as I did that which landed me at Golaghat.

My only companions were the Civil district officer, Captain Malcom Gray, whose house was a mile from mine, and three British Non-commissioned officers attached to the Transport depôt. A few tea planters lived at distances from two to twenty miles, and this made up the European population.

I had some twenty elephants in the station itself, and about three hundred mules and ponies, besides other animals at different times; there were also a large corps of ambulance bearers, and a small medical department, workshops, etc.; but in addition to Golaghat I had Transport at Dibrughar, in the extreme east of the Assam Valley; at Shillong, the beautiful hill station in the Khasia Hills; at Gowhatty, the capital of the country; at Silchar and Cachar, in the Surma Valley, and lastly at Kohima, the hill station some five thousand feet above sea-level, which was our Frontier post on the Munipore borders, and the headquarters of an Assam Gurkha regiment. To one and all of these places I was supposed to travel and inspect the Transport, and so long as I kept my Office straight I had a free hand to move wherever I thought it necessary. The chief work, however, was to maintain the supply of rations for the Native troops at Kohima, as well as the ammunition, war material, clothing, and other Government stores. This entailed working convoys through the Namba Forest during the cold weather months from November to the end of March; after that the rains set in, and the roads became impassable, except in case of emergency, when, of course, any country in the world can



A NAGA OF ASSAM

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be traversed. Golaghat is the last station in fairly open country, on the road from the River Brahmaputra to Kohima; after leaving it you plunge into dense forests, very like those of West Africa, from which you only emerge when, after going some eighty miles, you are well into the high mountain ranges which divide India from Munipore and Burmah. The first time I entered the Namba it seemed to me hopeless ever attempting to shoot it either on elephants or on foot, but it was not many weeks before I found it quite possible to shoot on foot, though impossible, except in limited areas, to do so off elephants.

The road, which was unmetalled and only bridged at the deepest streams, wound through magnificent forests; the giant nahores, a very hard kind of red iron wood which even white ants cannot relish, rose on all sides with their straight bare trunks and bushy tops, for all the world like the little trees in toy boxes; mammoth cotton trees stood like sentinels watching over their smaller brethren, whilst below there struggled for existence an undergrowth of every form and colour, and knitting all into one almost impenetrable mass were the beautiful canes, with their graceful tendrils, running along the roots and boughs, round from one giant to another, and finally shooting upwards and falling like stars in all directions, their shiny leaves reflected in the sunlight which but seldom can reach below the topmost boughs. On the path itself butterflies of every hue flitted hither and thither, and the bridges, which seemed their favourite resorts, were literally a blaze of brilliant colours. The silence of the forest was broken by the shrill calls of the hoolook—the tailless black monkey of Assam; the note started by one is soon taken up as a chorus by the whole pack, and their united efforts are weird in the extreme. The game-looking jungle cock, the shy college pheasant, the wood pigeon, green pigeon, partridge, and numerous kinds of smaller birds were plentiful, and duck and snipe revelled in the many silent pools, or in the waters of the Dhunsiri, whose course the road mainly followed. It is positively fascinating to march through such scenes, to

commune direct with nature and imbibe its unadulterated purity.

"This is not solitude."

But with all its beauties what interested me even more was the fact that in those dark forests roamed the mightiest of beasts—the elephant, bison, buffalo, and tiger—to say nothing of hundreds of smaller animals; and with man's instinctive desire I longed for the opportunity to slay. It came, but not as soon as I had hoped, for it took me two or three months to get into the new work, during which time I frequently rode distances of from sixty to a hundred miles in a day. My plan was to post ponies at each halting stage in the forest, and provide the sais (horse-keeper) with rations for himself and animal for a month at a time. There was no means of warning him when I would be coming, and thus not only could I drop down at any moment to see how the ponies were being fed and looked after, but I always knew my mount was ready for me. I carried a loaded revolver, in case of meeting wild beasts, which I very frequently did; and in my holsters a few sandwiches and a pint of beer. Thus equipped I never felt the slightest fatigue in covering the distance to Kohima, which was ninety-nine miles from Golaghat, in one day when necessary; or if work detained me at Nichuguard, the Transport Post at the foot of the hills, in two days at the outside.

Those rides through the silent jungles I shall never forget, and they were frequently most exciting. Almost my first trip, I was one day cantering as usual, and turning a corner I came on a tiger standing on the path, half covered by leaves and his head turned my way. I was riding a very timid pony, but fortunately I spotted the tiger before he did me; pulling up short, I quickly got hold of my revolver and turned the pony sharp about, keeping my eye on the tiger meanwhile.

Having put a couple of hundred yards between him and myself, I fired two shots into the air to scare the beast away, and after waiting for five minutes, and feeling sure he must have gone, I cautiously advanced again. At fifty yards

from where he had been standing I put spurs into the pony and literally flew past the spot. Imagine my surprise, not to say sheer fright, when I felt the pony violently sway to the right and dash into the thick grass which bordered the road; pulling all I knew, and very nearly being dismounted by the erratic movements of poor Halmirah (for that was his name), I managed to swing him round on to the path again, but if possible at increased speed. I then knew the reason. The tiger had hardly moved, but was still standing in his place as unconcerned apparently as if he was merely there to see the sport. Had I fallen, perhaps this story would not have found its way into print. I had many other adventures of a more or less similar nature, and when a few weeks afterwards Colonel Low came to Assam to inspect, I told him chaffingly of the perils his officers had to risk in the execution of their duty. We rode through the Namba Forest, and fortunately, to prove I was not romancing, we met a wild bull buffalo, which took up a commanding position on the road some two hundred yards in front of us and kept us at bay for some time before he betook himself to his haunts.

Sir Robert Low is very fond of music, and played the violin to perfection, and always carried it with him; and it was a treat, indeed, to hear him play, after a hard day's work and a tough ride, in those jungle lands where music such as he can produce is seldom heard. It must be an incomparable gift thus to have the power of softening the rough edge of life, and at the same time affording so much pleasure to others.

Before he left Golaghat for Calcutta, he received a telegram from Government, informing him that India was to provide a contingent for service in the Soudan, and a few days later I was ordered by wire to proceed to Suakin, calling first at Lahore, in the Punjab. What luck! I was quartered at the farthermost east end of India, beyond all hope, as I thought, of being sent westwards, and yet here I was under orders for service once again. I felt myself already well on the military ladder, and visions of charging

Dervishes and distant Khartoum rose on every side. I was able on this occasion to do a good turn to my friend Lugard by strongly recommending him for Assistant Transport Officer of the Indian Contingent. Chiefly through his own worth, but perhaps helped a little by my recommendation, he was given the post, and thus first landed in Africa, where his name was afterwards to become a household word. In twenty-four hours I was on my way. At Lahore I was ordered to raise a corps of Punjab muleteers, who were, on arrival in the Soudan, to take over mules from Cyprus and the South of Europe, and were to be attached to the British, and not the Indian Contingent Transport.

I proceeded to Gujranwala, a place on the railway north of Lahore, and within a few days I had completed my numbers.

It is extraordinary how keen the natives of India are to embark on any enterprise so long as it is under Government auspices. Here were men who knew they must cross the seas, the hated kala pani (or black water), a term they also use to express transportation to the Andaman Islands, they knew or rather imagined all its horrors, and some at least had heard of sea-sickness, which really is what they dread most in a sea voyage; yet I could have filled the ranks over and over again, notwithstanding the restricted field for recruiting and the short notice that had been given. Amongst those I enlisted was one Jwala Singh, a Sikh and an ex-Sowar of the 19th Bengal Lancers, who had ridden with his regiment at the Battle of Ahmed Khel; after the close of the war he joined me as an orderly and remained with me for thirteen years, serving faithfully and well through five campaigns. Each time I returned to India from leave the first man I met at Bombay was my gallant Sikh orderly. None more brave and true ever lived, and one of the saddest bits of news that ever reached me was the report of his death in 1898, whilst I was on the Niger. Poor old fellow! he sent me word to say he did not care to live now that his master had left India and would never return again.

CHAPTER V

1885–1886

THE SUAKIN EXPEDITION—BACK TO INDIA—TRANSPORT OFFICER AT GOLAGHAT AGAIN—SPORTING ADVENTURES IN ASSAM—HEALTH IN THE TROPICS

WE left Bombay for Suakin in the *Rosina*, a ship built at Sunderland; her decks consisted of iron plates and she was very low 'tween decks and the accommodation about as bad as it could be, in fact she was never meant to carry passengers of any sort. In addition to my men I had a few mules and horses, which had to stand on the slippery plates, their head ropes fastened to the rails round the poop; had we had a single day's rough weather every animal would have been killed. Fortunately it was as calm as a mill-pond all the way to Suakin.

Many of the men had little or no experience of mules, and we did all we could on the voyage to interest them in learning how to saddle, groom, etc. The arrangements for washing on this ship were nil, and as it was very necessary that the men should keep clean, I paraded them daily at a certain hour, when two hoses were turned on and every man had to take a run past them; strange to say, the Sikhs strongly resented this, as they said they objected to wash in salt water. I knew this was all nonsense, so stripping I myself led the way and they all followed, and after that they were the keenest for the daily tub, and always headed the Indian file double round the decks. We anchored outside Suakin on 21st March and entered the harbour at dawn on the 22nd. From the rigging we could see the Force leaving Suakin for Tofrek (McNeill's Zareba).

We had not been ashore long before we had practical demonstration that a big fight was going on. I had gone up to the water tower, from which you could plainly distinguish the smoke and dust, etc., in the direction of Tofrek, and soon large numbers of horses and mules, etc., some

wounded and bleeding, came galloping into Suakin. I stopped one Indian muleteer who gave me a most idiotic account, making out that he was apparently the only living man of all who had left that morning.

Next I met a British Lancer who was equally frightened and incoherent.

All was bustle and excitement in the camp and Fort; guards were being reinforced; Corps falling in under arms, and surplus followers, etc., being hurried inside the walls. An attack on Suakin was apparently expected; but the enemy had had a sufficient lesson for one day, and, notwithstanding the temporary unpreparedness of the gallant Berkshires, Fuzzy Wuzzy had learnt that he may surprise, but he cannot frighten the British soldier; the old 49th Foot behaved once more as they had done on many a stricken field, and were equalled in their courage and discipline by the 14th Sikhs, the 28th Bombay Infantry, and of course by the Royal Marines.

Next day there was more fighting, but only a few shots were fired into camp. I had a practical lesson that night as to the necessity of knowing the "countersign," or password, to distinguish friend from enemy. Having received orders to take over equipment at very short notice, I made for the Ordnance Store tents, which were some way from my own quarters; it was after dark and I had forgotten to inquire about a password; my orderly Jwala Singh was with me, when suddenly I was challenged, and before I could reply I saw a flash and a bullet whizzed past my head; instead of shouting I foolishly turned and ran, as I was not sure whether it was a friend or foe, and bang! another shot. I lay down and shouted for all I was worth, and as I heard no reply I turned and ran over the sands in the direction of my own camp. Next morning I could not retrace my course, nor did I ever discover from which spot I was fired at; but I never went out again at night without the countersign.

Why the British Transport ever asked for an Indian corps of muleteers I never understood. True! I was handed over several hundred mules, oversized animals, too big to be



SHIPS OF THE DESERT

DRAWING BY LADY HELEN GRAHAM

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saddled and handled by natives of India; I was also furnished with the very best English-made saddlery, gear, and equipment, and in short everything that money could buy was supplied liberally, but from the day we landed till we left the shores of the Red Sea, hardly once was the corps put to its legitimate work; in fact we all wondered what the mules had been purchased for.

To sit doing nothing is a very poor game on active service, and so my Subaltern, who belonged to a Punjab Cavalry regiment, managed to get himself attached to the 9th Bengal Lancers, which fine regiment formed part of the Indian Contingent, and I took every opportunity of joining the Staff, or serving in any capacity I could get taken on in, and thus accompanying the various Columns that were sent out either towards Tamai, Handoub, or along the railway then being constructed to Otao in the direction of Berber; I was thus enabled to see a little fighting and gain some experience of desert warfare.

Once only was my corps called on to join one of these expeditions, and that was to Otao. I had had by this time some considerable experience in Transport matters, and thought I knew something of my business, so when I received orders to load water we paraded in due time, only too glad to get a chance of doing something. I found some hundreds of wooden casks lying on the sands; these were meant for camel and not mule transport, and could easily be loaded into the camel suleetahs (canvas or string saddle-bags), but from their shape and size could not sit or be slung on mules. I at once pointed this out, but was told I must take them, as the flat-side galvanised mule kegs had already been loaded on the camels. After using every argument to prove the folly of the proceeding, I found myself obliged to obey orders. In the first place it was all the men could do to lift the weighty casks on to the huge European mules, and as fast as they were slung on they fell off, and the unfortunate Punjabis were at their wits' end how to manage, as the troops were already forming up; at last it was time to fall in ourselves, by which time I had about one-fourth of

the barrels loaded in a sort of way, and as there was no help for it I moved off, leaving the other three-fourths of the animals standing unloaded. I reported what had occurred and was told to get into my place in the great moving square. It never seemed to strike anybody that the absence of three-fourths of my mules meant a considerable shortage of water for the troops in a waterless desert, and I was so thoroughly disgusted it was no use saying anything more.

We started, and several casks fell off on the march and could not be reloaded amidst the mass of choking men and animals all huddled up in the square. As far as I remember some thirty or forty casks arrived full, and this was about all the Punjab Mule Corps was ever officially called on to do. I calculated the cost of that water to the Imperial Government at about £200 per half-pint. My object now became to find something for them to do, and so I organised them into Ambulance Troops, as most of the saddles were fitted for riding. In a very short time the men really became excellent riders and could drill in a rough way with great precision; they were taught to dismount and pick up sick or wounded men and quickly put them on the mules, then move off at a sharp trot; several of them had served in the Native cavalry, and these were appointed to command the different Troops. They became very quick and looked smart in their khaki clothes with red pugrys and kummerbunds.

One day General Sir Gerald Graham inspected them, and directed me to tell the men that he was much pleased at what he had seen. Immediately after parade, several of the men, apparently quite overcome by such an honour, came up and asked me to get permission from the General Sahib to arm them like Cavalry, and if their request had nothing else in it, it at least showed they were keen.

After a time my men began gradually to disappear from the Corps. Some were taken for the Indian Contingent, to replace casualties, sick etc., others to replace the rascally Greeks, Italians, Medes, Persians, and every other kind of nationality, that had dropped from heaven knows where, and become followers of the British Army on the shores of

the Red Sea. Amongst my Non-commissioned officers was a very old man, who had three smart sons also serving; they had offered to enlist on condition that their father was allowed to accompany them, and being very good specimens of Punjabis I had agreed. One of them wished to enlist in the 9th Bengal Lancers, and I mentioned it to his father. The old man was perfectly furious, and left me vowing vengeance against the prodigal who would desert his father in a strange land. Shortly afterwards the erring son came running to my tent and dashed in, placing me between himself and his father, who followed with a stick. "Where is my faithless son?" shouted the old man, "let me get at him!" But I soon arranged matters, and father and son were reconciled. Indian sons have a great reverence for their parents, and the man who would face any foe cowers before an angry father or mother, especially the latter.

During the time I was at Suakin, Lord Wolseley came round by sea to inspect the Forces. I went to luncheon one day on board his ship the *Queen*, and that was the first and only time I had the honour of meeting the ex-Commander-in-Chief; but though I never had the good fortune to meet him again, he was thoughtful enough to send me a letter of congratulation on my return from Ashanti in 1901.

On the break up of the Eastern Soudan Army, I once again returned to India, and was rejoiced to find myself reposted to the Eastern Frontiers, where I relieved an officer who hated the wild life and was only too glad to get away. The last forty miles to Golaghat had to be done in a terribly ancient, dirty, small, and leaky launch. The engines rattled so much that it was impossible to hear anyone speaking, even if he shouted. The River Dhunsiri was in high flood, and I thought every moment we should go to the bottom, as monstrous trees came down stream, one after the other, at an alarming speed. There was one lady on board, and the accommodation was limited to a tiny cabin over the stern, which was too awful for description. However, necessity knows no law, and so she had to brave it out. Our rate of progress never exceeded three miles an hour. Turning a

sharp bend the engines gave a prolonged groan and collapsed. With difficulty an anchor was heaved over and only just in time, as in another ten seconds we should have crashed into a huge tree trunk sticking out of the water, and without doubt everyone would have been drowned, as there were no means of holding on to the banks, which consisted of quicksand, and here and there rushes and high grass under water. Whilst the engines were being doctored up, I shot an alligator which ventured to show his head twenty yards from the launch, and offered a reward if anybody would take a boat out and fetch him. Three men volunteered, and, after much difficulty, succeeded in getting ropes round him and towed him past the boat, when we all held on. The animal was got on board, and amid much excitement the ropes were unloosed; but hardly had we done so, when with a mighty splash of his tail, which floored the engineer, the amphibious beast made a last dying effort and disappeared over the side. He only just missed going down the engine-room hatch, which feat, had he accomplished it, would probably have created a record. A live alligator in an engine-room would, under any circumstances, be a decided curiosity, but in the engine-room of that prehistoric little steamboat would have meant the end of its career.

My quarters at Golaghat were of the most primitive description; the floors were all mud and very damp, it was impossible to put down mats or carpets, as white ants would devour them in a few hours. My second night there I found one pair of boots half eaten and a small hillock formed under my bed. I was lent a better house on the river later on, where I was very comfortable. With the advent of the cold weather I was enabled to get some excellent shooting, and we also subscribed for and got a pack of hounds from England, and many a good run they gave us after jackals.

Tigers were fairly numerous round Golaghat, and an elephant was always kept near my quarters in case of any khubber (news) being brought in of a "kill." I sometimes took out one or two of the British Sergeants attached to the

Transport, and on one occasion a tiger was driven out by the beater elephants straight in front of one of them. I expected to see him fire, but not a bit of it, he merely gazed at the beast, who stood hesitating as to what he should do. "Fire!" I shouted, but my gallant Non-commissioned officer was so astounded by the apparition that he would do nothing of the kind. The tiger, thinking he had given him ample opportunity, then turned towards me, and as he ran past I dropped him dead. I never took Sergeant N——, out again, and I do not think he ever wished to go.

In 1885-6 the country round Dhunsiri Mukh, which is some twenty miles from Golaghat and on the River Brahmaputra, was a perfect sportsman's paradise; rhinoceros, buffalo, swamp deer, leopards, and tigers were numerous, and a few gaur (bison) were also occasionally to be met. When I recall those days with all their happy recollections, it sometimes seems as if it must have been a dream, for where could any man have had better opportunities for shooting? Then, again, there were many right good fellows, who lived, it is true, considerable distances apart; but what is distance in such countries? Everyone helped his neighbour, and ponies, servants, and traps were all at one's disposal whenever wanted. Jim Stevenson, and Burrowes of Halmirah; and Cambridge of Hautely Estate, kept almost open house, and so it was with many others. Captain (now Colonel) Malcolm Gray, the Deputy Commissioner, was fortunately a sportsman and always ready to help with his rifle.

I made a fairly good polo ground at Golaghat, and twice a week had out the British and Native Non-commissioned officers who could ride, for a game, and assisted by neighbouring planters and an occasional visitor, the polo ball was kept rolling regularly.

Early this spring I had a visit from my parson brother, who was then stationed in Kamptee, in the Central Provinces, and came up for some shooting. Unfortunately it was too early in the year and the high grass had not been burnt, so he got little sport, but it was very enjoyable having him

with me. During the time he was there an incident occurred which forcibly illustrates the strange adventures one frequently experienced in that, then comparatively unknown, part of India. As he was not accustomed to riding the long distances, which had become child's play to me, and yet wished to accompany me from Golaghat to Kohima, in the Naga Hills, through the Namba Forest, a distance of a hundred miles, I arranged to do the journey in three stages, and accordingly sent on supplies, etc. These were carried in a very light hospital dandy, and I had picked men selected, who received double wages for their work. The first stage was covered without mishap, but the second day, whilst we were riding alongside the dandy, first one and then two men said they felt ill and could go no farther. Shortly afterwards one of them began to roll on the ground and to show symptoms of cholera. Night was coming on, and we still had some miles to travel before we reached our camp ground, and we had no medicines, but instead poured brandy down the man's throat. As is the way with natives, the others lost their heads, and said their last hour had come, and that they would be eaten by tigers in the forest, and nothing we could do would persuade them to make an effort. The unfortunate man, who was by this time dangerously ill, kept up a long wail, and asked us not to leave him on the road. What a strange race! as if we should think of doing such a thing. There was only one means of saving his life and that was to get him into camp somehow, so we removed our small stock of food, and placing it on the head of the only available man, and putting the sick man inside, my brother and I shouldered the lumbering dandy and finished the journey. Our shoulders were peeled and our backs ached for days afterwards, but we brought the man safely in, and never fail to have a laugh when we recall how we were let in.

In 1886 I had a splendid week's sport along the banks of the Brahmaputra. I had fifteen elephants with me and had arranged everything as far as I could. My first morning I came on two swamp-deer in a long bheel, where the grass never grows higher than a foot or two, and as I had shot

very few at that time I determined to dismount from the elephant and get up close to them. The grass all round me was some fifteen to twenty feet high, but by crawling along the rhino and buffalo paths, which are in fact regular tunnels through the dense undergrowth, I got to within sixty yards and could see them browsing, and was about to fire, when I spotted a fine bull buffalo feeding quietly in the open about seventy yards to my left. I had only a ·500 express with me, having left my double 8-bore in the howdah; however, I fired both barrels and hit him in the face, one bullet shattering his jaw. It was a damp morning and not a breath of wind, hence the smoke hung; he saw the smoke and instantly charged in my direction. Taking to my heels I ran as fast as I could move through the tunnels, and in the direction where I had left the elephant; but Buff was too quick for me, and seeing I could not get away before he was on me, I hurled myself into the tall grass and tried to reload, but before I could get in a cartridge he was within a few paces and I thought it was all up with me, when he suddenly stopped, and I dared not move lest he should hear me. He gave two or three furious snorts which were terrifying, and then charged away to his left and again pulled up. But meantime I was up and off in search of the elephant, and was overjoyed to see the howdah towering above the jungle. I shouted as loud as I could to the mahout to make the elephant sit down, and leaping as I never did in my life, managed to crawl into the seat. None too soon either, for the buffalo, hearing the noise, was in full chase. The elephant was on her legs again in an instant and faced round. Crash! came my infuriated foe into her, and for a moment I could neither fire nor see anything, but recovering I put two 8-bore bullets into his back, and Maggie the elephant stood splendidly.

The buffalo did not fall, but stood paralysed, and after some little time we managed to get near enough for me to see him plainly, when another bullet through his neck finished him.

A couple of days later, just after I had left camp, we

crossed a bheel (swamp), and I saw a crow sitting on what I took to be a black stump sticking out of the water; however, as I approached it began to move, and up rose a rhinoceros. The bird had been sitting on its horn, which was just visible; it was, however, too far for me to get a shot at. I saw seven rhino that day.

Almost my last day's leave I saw a sight that seldom falls to the lot of anyone to witness, and I will relate it in full. Moving through the eternal sea of tall grass, I came on a rhinoceros standing in a comparatively open bit of ground with his head low in the attitude of listening. Firing two barrels from my trusty 8-bore at his head, I was delighted to see him sink on his knees, as I fondly imagined to rise no more; but the mahout for some reason lost his head and turned sharp round, and it was several seconds before I could look back again, when, to my surprise, the rhino had vanished. However, I knew he was badly hit, and followed his tracks. For two or three hours I kept on the blood trails, but still he managed to keep ahead of me, and when darkness set in I had to give it up. As I turned towards my camp I felt desperately disappointed, but determined to be after him at dawn next morning. Before daylight I had started, and about nine o'clock saw tracks of fresh blood; I had not proceeded far when I heard a peculiar moaning noise on the right, and halted the elephant. Whilst listening I was startled by the roar of a tiger, followed again by the same moan I had first heard, and then a succession of angry growls. Turning in the direction of the sounds, we moved on 150 yards, when I could just see the top of the high grass about 50 yards ahead swaying as if shaken by some big beast. Again we halted, but when I once more motioned the mahout to advance, he absolutely refused to do so. This is always one of the most annoying things in shooting off elephants, and unless you have a thoroughly trained and plucky driver you must submit to it, for he is absolute master of the animal's movements, and it is of no use losing your temper, though I fear I have very often done so. Minutes passed, and still the noise continued, and



IN ANOTHER INSTANT WE WERE WITHIN TEN YARDS OF THE TURMOIL

DRAWING BY LADY HELEN GRAHAM

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I perceived that the beast, or beasts, whatever they might be, evidently had no idea of our presence. Eventually yielding to alternate coaxing and threats, the mahout gave a low cry of "Allah!" and my tusker, "Payne," who was quite as excited by this time as I was, rushed forward with a trumpet, and in another instant we were within ten yards of the turmoil. There, in a beaten down space of some fifteen square yards, was a rhino, half lying, half standing, covered with blood, and engaged in deadly combat with two tigers, who were endeavouring to kill him. It was all the work of a few seconds, but I can still see them all three. One tiger had his neck fearfully lacerated, evidently by the rhino's teeth; the other was also covered with blood, and the rhino himself was dreadfully mangled, every soft portion of him having been torn by his angry antagonists. It was a gruesome sight, and even the elephant stood stock still as if admiring this struggle between the savage beasts in nature's wildest realms.

It takes long to tell, but was all too short in reality, and in any case, whatever had to be done must perforce be done quickly; so bringing the double Greener to my shoulder, I fired the right barrel at the tiger on my right, just grazing his neck, and as I did so the other sprang past my elephant; he could only have been five yards from me, but I grieve to own that I missed him clean. The pace was tremendous, and I was very excited, and, yes, sad to say, I had missed or lost both tigers, and just when they seemed in my clutches. Such is life! If I live to shoot fifty more tigers, the grief of losing those two will still remain. However, there was my rhino to be tackled, and although he had already had a hard tussle for life, he was game to the end, and, springing to his feet, prepared to charge me. A bullet in his head finished his existence.

Next day I had to return to work, and rode in twenty miles on an elephant. If you care for jungle scenes and can appreciate the holy calm that reigns therein, you can hardly do so better than off the back of a hatee; in the first place he

moves so quietly; no footfall is heard; and then you are so well raised above everything that you not only get a long view, but at any moment may come on wild animals, who will seldom run from you if they are accustomed to seeing wild elephants in their haunts, until you are quite close up to them. Nothing alters the course you are steering; at one moment you force your way through almost impenetrable creepers and undergrowth, then down a horribly dangerous-looking bank, and at the bottom of it you plunge into eight or ten feet of water; then the opposite bank must be climbed, and the huge beast gets up it somehow; it is nervous work at first, but one soon gets to know the marvellous power of an elephant to overcome almost any obstacle. Meantime you are comfortably seated, and can understand the words of the Psalmist, "Wonderful are Thy works." Yes, wonderful indeed! for cast your eyes away to the north, across the majestic waters of the great Brahmaputra (the Son of God), and behold a scene unequalled in the world; hundreds on hundreds of giant peaks white with eternal snow; dark valleys, cold and grey; a sky so clear and blue that it seems almost too beautiful to be real; and you are looking on the Himalayas, the most stupendous of the works of creation on this planet. It is all like a passing dream, and as the memory wanders back and passes in review the scenes of many lands, you come to the conclusion that few, if any, can surpass in majesty the panorama now before you.

The life in Assam was one to keep a man fit and strong; thousands of miles did I ride through those forests, a hundred miles in a day appearing as nothing when once I got to know the ponies and the roads; and at the end of a two-hundred-mile ride in seventy-two hours I have dined out and sat up late. This proves the climate to be not so bad as some would paint it. The truth is that in all tropical countries the secret of health is exercise; I go so far as to say if a man will only go to bed fatigued, and frequently even dead tired, he will rise fitter next morning than his neighbour, who perhaps only takes sufficient exercise to keep himself alive. If

you lie down because you can no longer keep awake, you will at once go into a sound sleep, and even though it may be hot and sultry, nature demands a certain amount of absolute rest for the body, and before you again wake you have put in more sound sleep than if you had lain down simply because it was a certain hour of the night. Of course, all this is supposing you have the bodily strength to endure fatigue; but my argument is that, if men will only try the recipe, their strength will at least not be less than it naturally is, but will increase. It is not so often the constitution that is at fault as the lack of energy to keep the flesh subservient to the spirit.

The tropics are not places to which many people go to recruit their health, but even in the most unhealthy parts of West Africa I have found that the observance of three simple rules will enable you to withstand any climate; he who will try them will, I feel sure, not have cause to regret it. First, never let a day pass without taking as much physical exercise as you can endure. Secondly, never keep on wet clothes a moment longer than you are absolutely obliged to; and lastly, whatever you may have to dispense with, hold fast to your mosquito curtain, and never be without it. The first rule I never neglected; the second I have carried out in every land; and the last I have rigidly observed, whether I have had a bed to sleep on or only the damp ground, often and oft without any kind of shelter, 'mid rain and storms; still in my haversack, whatever else there may or may not have been, a mosquito net was always to be found. I never had a day's fever in West Africa, and this last precaution had not a little to say to it.

CHAPTER VI

1886–1887

THE BURMESE FRONTIER EXPEDITION—MUNIPORE—TUMMOO—THE KUBO VALLEY—THE LOKCHAO RIVER—CAPTURE OF CHUNYONE—THE CHINDWIN RIVER—END OF THE EXPEDITION—RETURN TO ASSAM

THE healthy and interesting life at Golaghat was suddenly ended by the joyful intelligence that I was once again to proceed on active service; this time to Burmah; a service in which activity was to be put to the severest test. The Eastern Frontier District was then commanded by Brigadier-General John J. H. Gordon, C.B., and the headquarters were then, as now, at Shillong. It would be presumptuous for me to offer any remarks on my General, but this much, at least, I may record, that at his hands I received every possible kindness and consideration. It was a *sine quâ non* that you must work honestly and hard under his command, but the officer or man who did this, and never tried to shirk his duty, could find no better commander or friend than the General under whose orders I was about to start on my fourth campaign.

From Golaghat to Kohima, the capital of the Naga Hills district, is one hundred miles; here was quartered a regiment of Gurkhas. The route to it led through the Namba Forest, which I have already described.

Leaving Kohima you gradually descend over what then was an exceedingly bad and unbridged mountain track, into the valley of Munipore, a distance of ninety-five miles. At Munipore was a detachment of the 4th Bengal Infantry, forming the escort of the Political Agent, and portions of the 42nd and 44th Gurkhas.

The state of Munipore was semi-independent, and at that time friendly to us, and assisted us in a perfunctory manner with some of their irregular Infantry, and in a very small way with food supplies.

From Munipore you march during the rainy season over

roads raised above the level of the endless swamps and rice fields; these means of communication are, after heavy rain, of the most impossible description. The material of which they are constructed is glutinous mud, with here and there sufficient twigs or branches, cast promiscuously over the surface, to trip you up or upset your pony. Swift-running rivers are met with just often enough to delay thoroughly any kind of Transport you may possess, and, as if determined to fill up the cup of discomfort, every magnate or head of a village who happens to be the proud possessor of an elephant invariably drives it along the roads, to the admiration of his fellow-countrymen and the distraction of the unfortunate European who may be toilsomely plodding over them. Twenty miles of this, and beyond the now historic village of Thobal you come to Pullel, at the foot of the hills, and rapidly ascend and descend with wearying repetition the broken mountains and valleys which lie between Munipore and Burmah, till you find yourself on the Burmese frontiers; and at the sixty-fourth mile from Munipore you arrive at the town of Tummoo, where you are made aware by the "sunshine" (when there is any) "and the palm trees and the tinkly temple bells" that you are indeed on "the road to Mandalay."

Although it is hardly correct to say I was going to Mandalay, I belonged to one of the many columns which were at that time scouring the country of the erstwhile monarch, Thebaw. From Golaghat to Tummoo then, a distance of 258 miles, was my transport charge, and for 160 of these I was solely responsible to my General. Only those who have held similar appointments in similar countries will appreciate what this means, especially as operations only began with the advent of the monsoon rains, which, while they last, are more or less continuous and incessant in that part of the world. However, this was no time for thinking of difficulties, nor was General Gordon the man who ever let them stand in his way, and so when I had paid him a visit at Shillong and received his instructions, I felt that half the obstacles had already vanished; and encouraged by

the letters he frequently wrote me, I and the few European subordinates attached to the department soon learned to consider ourselves fortunate; and the slippery hill tracks and the hopelessly awful roads all came in in the day's work, which was every now and again further brightened by a short telegram of congratulations from the headquarters office at Shillong. The most trying toil becomes a pleasure under such circumstances.

I will shortly describe the causes which led to the formation of the Field Force now about to operate in the Kubo Valley. This portion of Burmah lies west of the River Chindwin, which, flowing in a south-easterly direction, eventually joins the Irrawaddy; it embraces the country somewhat north of the twenty-third parallel of latitude, and was hemmed in on the west by the Chin Lushai tribes and the semi-independent State of Munipore. Owing to the vast military operations then taking place throughout Burmah, the Kubo Valley offered a safe retreat to many malcontents, and being situated away on the extreme west and having no permanent garrison of troops, became a happy hunting ground for any leader who might choose to make it so. At the southern end of the valley stood the town of Kendat, on the Chindwin; and on the 11th May, 1886, Major Trotter, the Political Agent at Munipore, with an escort of one hundred men of the 4th Bengal Infantry, left Tummoo to proceed there. It was apparently believed from such political information as was available that the people of the Kubo Valley were not ill disposed to us, and that the march would be unopposed. However, the day after leaving Tummoo, Trotter was attacked by a large body of the enemy, and himself mortally wounded, and Major Hailes was obliged to retire on Tummoo. Reinforcements of the 42nd Gurkhas from Kohima, under Captain Stevens, were hurried down, and on the 19th of June a second column moved out to attack the Burmese, who had taken up a position at Chunyone, three miles from the town, and defended it with a stout stockade. Notwithstanding the gallant behaviour of the little Gurkhas, who at one time actually

got up to the timbers and attempted to cut away the canes and creepers which bound them, the attack failed. Major Hailes was dangerously wounded, and the Column again retired to Tummoo, whilst the rebels not only increased in numbers, but greatly strengthened and enlarged their defences.

Tummoo thus became an isolated post on the Frontier, entirely cut off from all communications with the Army operating in Burmah, and dependent for its troops, supplies, and food on a long line of communication 258 miles from Golaghat, which was itself twenty miles from the River Brahmaputra and the Port of landing; making in all a total of 278 miles. Along this route local supplies were practically nil, as even in Munipore itself rice was almost the sole available food, and the Bengal sepoys could not live on it. To add to the difficulties of the situation sickness in all its tropical forms was raging in Tummoo; Europeans and natives alike were laid low, and the Munipore Durbar, alarmed by the constant passage of troops and Transport through the country, were ever placing all kinds of hindrances in our way.

At the end of May I left Golaghat with every available Transport animal laden with supplies, ammunition, etc., and began the toilsome march through the Namba Forest. When wrapped in rain and mist you move on day after day through endless jungles, the feeling of depression grows strong, and when an occasional break in the weather, with a few hours, maybe, of sunshine and brightness comes, it is in truth something to be truly thankful for. It was so with me when, having passed Kohima, I arrived near the Munipore Frontier post of Mao Thana; though perched on the top of mountains 6,000 feet high, the clouds and fog had for days concealed everything from view, and now the mists suddenly rolled away like a retreating tide; the sun came out in full splendour; a cool breeze sprang up from the north, and a magnificent view unfolded itself. On every side stretched the glorious mountains; down every valley thundered the swollen streams; from every rock and tree

fell the crystal beads gathered from the moisture. Birds and beasts alike appeared to revel in the change; the wily Naga left his smoky hut, and taking up a coign of vantage, listlessly watched the long string of animals as they passed; no doubt thinking foolish, indeed, was the incomprehensible white man who chose to walk abroad in such a country at such a time of year. The muleteers whipped off their coats, and most of their other garments, and cast them on the saddles or swung them in the wind, eager to avail themselves of their only opportunity of having a dry change.

All nature seemed anxious to give us a helping hand as we entered the village, and even the Maharaja's guard, which had been sent to meet us, summoned sufficient energy to turn out as smartly as it was capable of doing, and presenting arms in its own prehistoric fashion. The village fowl and biscuits, washed down with some whisky and water, seemed as good as any club dinner that day, and one's thoughts summed up might be best expressed in a few words—"It is good enough to go through anything for such an hour." At times like these, however small may be the task a man is called upon to perform, it is surely one of life's greatest pleasures to feel that there may be people in distant lands who, unknown to you, are watching your career. This has been my experience, and one of my best rewards.

A few days later we reached the camp at Sengmai, the last halt before entering Imphal, the capital of Munipore. I climbed on to the highest peak and looked down on the great plain, dotted with villages and covered with fields of rice and corn; the entire valley seemed a sheet of water, and in fact practically was so. With a glass I could distinguish the Fort and Maharaja's palace, and beyond, to the east, rose the mountains which must be traversed for over sixty miles before you descend into Burmah. I little dreamed then that from the selfsame hill I should, five years later, be looking on the same scene, but with a lurid light cast over it by the devouring flames from the doomed palaces and buildings. Yet in truth this is exactly what

happened, for in 1891, when I again visited Munipore, it was as foe, not friend, and the flames which lit the Royal residences and the magazines the night before we entered Imphal were lighted by the people themselves, rather than that they should fall into the hands of the avenging soldiers of the Queen.

The day I arrived at Munipore was a gloomy one, indeed; the Residency had been turned into a hospital (five years later it was again a hospital for a few hours whilst it was bombarded by the Munipuris, and then abandoned by our defeated troops); Major Trotter was dying of the wound received near Tummoo; Major Hailes was crippled from the same cause, and a Subaltern of the 4th Bengal Infantry, who died shortly after, and other officers, occupied all the available rooms.

I took up my quarters in a hut on the duck-pond in the Residency grounds; the floor was only mud and saturated with water, but for months that had to do for the Head office of the Transport. As the General afterwards wrote, "the difficulties seem appalling," and a former General had pronounced the Munipore-Tummoo route as impossible to send troops over. However, the troops were now fast coming, and they must be got over and that soon. The enemy could no longer be permitted to build fortifications within three miles of our only Post in the Kubo Valley and defy us, as they were then doing.

It may not be uninteresting to describe shortly the march of the first convoy from Imphal to Tummoo. It consisted of mules, ponies and elephants, and the first two days we marched along the raised roads I have already described. The third day's march was from Pullel to a place called Aimole, perched on the top of a steep hill. In the first mile it was necessary to cross over a quicksand, through which only after immense exertions was it possible to get the ponies and mules; loads fell off at every few yards; the poor beasts floundered and struggled gamely till victory at last rewarded our efforts; the elephants had to cross over a low, rocky spur, as it was unsafe to risk them in the bogs.

Emerged from this slough of despond you found yourself at the bottom of a steep zigzag path, which wound away through trees and scrub.

This path was so slippery that neither man nor beast could climb it without falling, and we had no axes or tools of any kind to improve it, so after exhausting our ingenuity I ordered the elephants to be taken up first. By the aid of the marvellous powers with which they are endowed, these huge animals toiled up steadily; now using a tree to assist them, again by sheer force tearing away a rock or root and pushing themselves with their monstrous hind legs on to a ledge, but ever slowly, but surely ascending; one followed another until at last they had made a rude sort of fish ladder up the slimy hill.

Now comes the turn of the smaller quadrupeds, and by degrees one after another, after hours of labour patiently borne, the last load has reached the top and we cry halt! It is still raining pitilessly and for shelter there is but one small grass hut; that is occupied by the precious rations of flour and a few European and hospital necessaries. No peace for the Transport followers yet! the mules must be tethered; there is no grain to give them, hence grass must be cut; and that is scarce where trees are plentiful. How well those excellent Punjab drivers know what discipline means; dead beat, no food since morning, and night fast coming on, but no matter to them, they have eaten the Sirkar's (Government's) salt and they will do their duty. And so after another hour's work, the grass lies before the mules; the elephants return laden with such branches and rushes as can be had; the saddles are piled up and covered with tarpaulins; the roll is called, and the faithful servant of the State seats himself down under the nearest tree; his only shelter the open sky above; his only food a couple of pounds of flour; his cooking-pots and other belongings would go into the pockets of a shooting-coat; and having quickly cooked and consumed his humble meal, he rolls himself up in a wet blanket which hourly grows more soaked from the incessant rain, mutters a few words in

praise of his Creator, and sleeps as only those who have a clear conscience of duty well performed can do.

The dawn has not shown signs of breaking when he is astir again; he swallows a few mouthfuls of the overnight cold and sordid-looking chupatties (half-cooked dough cakes), and is ready to do another day's duty for the Sovereign he serves.

Often at night have I walked round the sleeping Transport camp in Indian campaigns and read a lesson in real life; dull must be the man who cannot appreciate its meaning. Hundreds, often thousands, of miles from their own homes, with no great object to be gained, and frequently amid every form of discomfort, the Transport followers of the Army of India give their best years and services to the British Government.

Of them it may well be said:—

> "These were not led by anger, nor yet by lust made bold,
> Renown they thought above them, nor did they thirst for gold,
> To them their leader's signal was as the voice of God,
> Unmoved and uncomplaining the path he showed they trod."

I have seen the dark followers of another great European Power in the Field and have now no difficulty in understanding why England is a great colonising nation. It is inborn in our race. Of course it is not to be supposed that the above description of a march is an everyday occurrence; far from it. In Afghanistan, on the North-West Frontiers of India, in the Soudan I have known the follower under far different circumstances, when his rations were regular and ample, his clothing and housing all that could be expected on active service, and his duties not excessive; but I am writing of a particular campaign and a particular country of which I have seen a great deal, and there he had unsurpassed hardships; but his willingness is the same in all lands, and with British officers he prides himself he can go anywhere and do anything; and it is not an idle boast.

The next day's march was more or less a repetition of the first, varied by frequent descents, which if anything were rather more trying than the climbs. Darkness found us on

the narrow ridge of a hill with very precipitous sides, and although everything was soaking wet, we could find no water nor dare anyone attempt to move about, so black was the night. I had found it impossible to carry a tent beyond Aimole; so Commander and men all lay down in the open, and hungry, for it was too much trouble to bother about cooking a meal under such conditions. A few mules and ponies were killed by falling over precipices during the two following days; one of them, unfortunately for me, with my small personal supply of medical comforts.

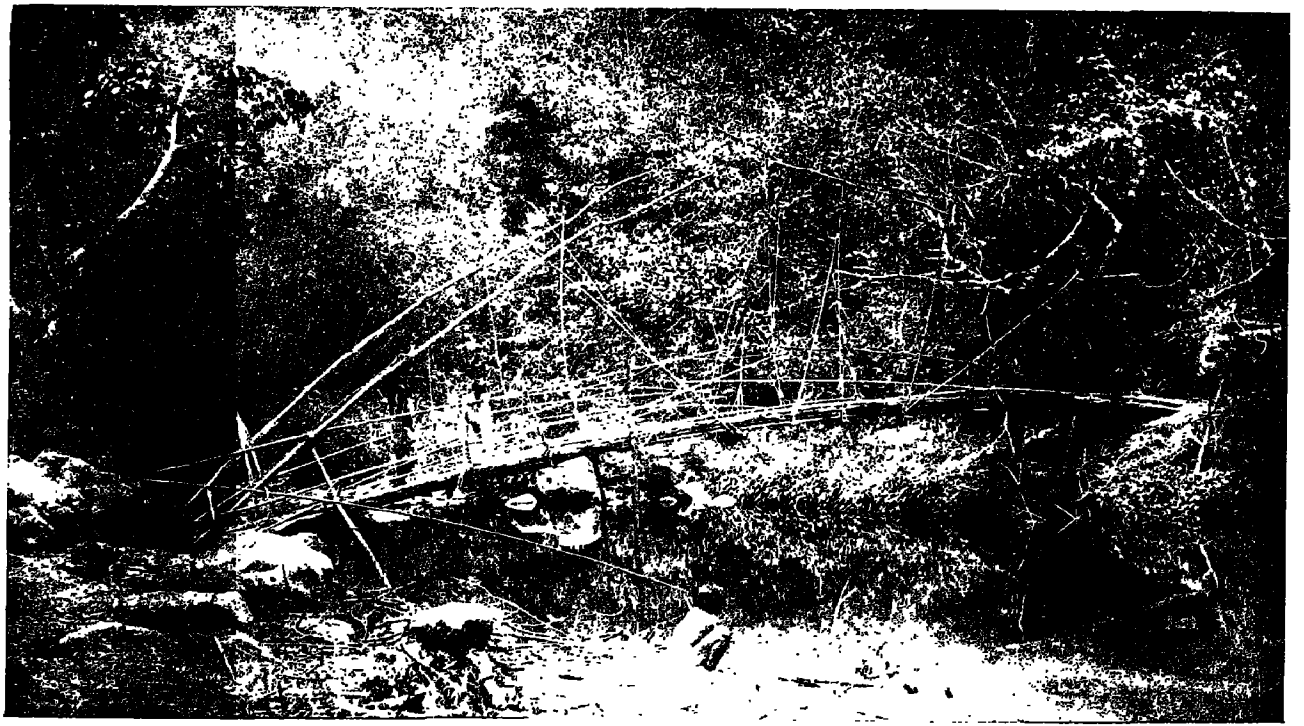
The sixth day's marching brought us to the Lokchao River, or a distance of only something over forty miles from Munipore; the last few of these through dense bamboo jungles which played havoc with the loads.

We made a halt here of a day, as the animals were all done up and there were many girth and saddle galls to be attended to. The same story; rain and storm all night; but next day the sun appeared, and for the first time for some days I bethought me of a bath, and that in real running water.

Those who know the sensation of being eaten by mosquitoes may form some feeble idea of what a bath in that river meant! there were no mosquitoes, but within five minutes I was almost done to death by sand-flies; dashing out of the water and shouting to my servant I managed to get on some garments whilst he violently whipped me with a towel to keep off the torments; when it came to putting on my boots, however, I was confronted with a second enemy, for I had been badly bitten by leeches the previous night, and my feet had become so swollen and sore they would not get into the boots. My companion, an officer in the 42nd Gurkhas, was a right cheery fellow and a good doctor, and with his assistance the difficulty was got over.

The left bank of the Lokchao is a precipitous hill some hundreds of feet in height, and our next camp must perforce be on its summit.

The path was bad beyond words, but we got there somehow, though it would only be a repetition of other marches,



TEMPORARY BRIDGE OVER RIVER LOKCHAO

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with rather more than their difficulties, to describe it. It was during this day's march I had given orders directing every muleteer to relieve any sick animal by carrying the bags of flour on his own head until the worst part of the road had been got over. In order to do this the men had to make a double journey, but it could not be helped, and orders are orders. I found one man had disobeyed the order and had his sick mule laden; when asked his reasons he replied, "No one can carry such loads up this hill." For the sake of example and also to shame him before his comrades, I shouldered the bag and I own with difficulty landed it at the top; but it had its effect, and that man never excused himself again when a job had to be done. Eventually we descended into the valley of the Kubo and arrived at Tummoo.

Thus ended one of the most trying marches with animal transport that I was ever called on to perform, nor, indeed, would it be possible for laden beasts to get over any worse country; and even though I found Tummoo was a hotbed of disease and discomfort, it all seemed a haven of peace and rest after the labours of the long journey from Golaghat.

No sooner did I get back to Munipore than I reported to General Gordon the true state of affairs. There was no telegraph line beyond Kohima, and hence a delay of a few days occurred; then came his orders. They were explicit and clear, and whilst giving me the greatest latitude in the performance of my own duties, empowered me to use every effort to improve the present track, or make a new road if labour was available. Further, I was to purchase as many as I could procure of the small but hardy ponies on which Munipore rightly prides itself; a postal service was to be arranged right through to Burmah, and rest-houses built at all camping grounds. Naturally, I was delighted to have so much responsibility given me, and each and all of his orders were put into execution as soon as it was possible to do so.

Between June and August constant Transport convoys passed from the Base to Tummoo, and gradually the road was improved. To anyone not conversant with Munipore

as it then was, it would hardly be possible to understand the obstacles that the Durbar placed in our way on every occasion when their help was asked. I shall endeavour in the next chapter to describe Munipore in its palmy days, but here it is sufficient to say that whatever we asked for was point-blank refused, or only given after the exercise of considerable pressure. If a bridge had been washed away, the officer in charge of that road was very ill and could not possibly go out to have it repaired! If supplies were demanded, inquiries were always promised, but invariably the same reply came, viz. that the granary was empty, and even the Raja's family short of food, and so on. The Political Agent was dying of a wound, and no permanent officer had arrived to replace him. Matters improved when Mr. Primrose, of the Indian Civil Service, was appointed to the post, and the Durbar realised that it could no longer befool the Indian Government, but till that time arrived the Munipore Durbar was a rather worse enemy than the Burmese beyond their borders.

Towards the end of August considerable reinforcements of Infantry and two guns passed through Munipore for Tummoo, and then for the fourth time I crossed those forbidding hills, for it was now determined to give the long-left-alone enemy a sharp lesson and drive him from the Kubo Valley. By the night of the 9th of October everything was in readiness at Tummoo, and the brave little Gurkhas held a kind of ceremony of blessing the Colours; all the officers and Transport British Non-commissioned officers were, of course, present, and a grand bonfire cheered up the gathering. Major Stevens, of the 42nd Gurkhas, was in command of the attacking Column, which consisted of portiôns of the 42nd and 44th Gurkhas and a detachment from the 4th Bengal Infantry. There were also two 7-pounder guns and about 800 Infantry of the Maharaja of Munipore's army, but these latter took very good care not to expose themselves unnecessarily to fire. Before dawn the Force had fallen in and moved off in the direction of Chunyone. At about seven o'clock scouts reported

a stockade directly to our front, and also that the grass and brushwood for some 300 yards outside it had been cut and cleared.

The Burman is not the "first-class fighting man" that Kipling has described the Soudanese to be; he builds first-class stockades and sticks to them so long as he is quite safe from shell fire, but when a determined attack is made he invariably finds safety in flight. Perhaps it is the wisest and only course for him to pursue; perhaps I should do the same in similar circumstances; but that does not disprove the fact that taken all round, the Burman, be he rebel, dacoit, or what you will, does not come under the heading of a first-class fighting man.

Many messages had been sent into our camp, each one more boastful than the last, and each threatening us with extermination unless we evacuated Tummoo and retired to Munipore; and now the day of battle was come, and the Bohs and their young bloods were to prove their mettle.

The silence of the forest was only broken by the occasional crackle of a twig or the squish from puddles underfoot, and we began to think it was becoming doubtful if friend Burman intended to fight at all.

But he did so intend, and the troops were quickly deployed, the guns came into action, and soon the silent forest was resounding with the crack of rifles and the hoarse bursting of shells. Again and again did the 7-pounders emit shot on shot against the great timbers, solidly embedded and tightly bound with green cane and withes; but with no effect. I saw it then; I have seen it since over and over again; the ordinary 7-pounder muzzle-loading gun is quite useless against any sort of strong defensive works, however rudely constructed. In this case nothing less than a 9-pounder gun could have had any effect, and a Vickers-Maxim gun, as now constructed, would have made a broad breach in a few moments. However, the Force had to use such equipment as it was provided with, and had the enemy had the pluck to hold on to their stockades, they could not have been turned out without severe loss to us.

Whilst the firing was at its height and volleys swept the top of the stockade, I could not help admiring the pluck of one man, who was seated in a kind of Machicouli gallery, and coolly and deliberately loaded and fired as quickly as he could; after each shot he disappeared below his timber protection. I watched him and had two shots at him, but he got away safely. No impression had been made on the stockade after some half-hour's firing, but suddenly the enemy's fire, which had never been heavy, slackened, the bugles sounded the charge, and Chunyone was ours! Our casualties were only one man killed and a few wounded; so Jack Burman did not do us much damage. A company had been sent round the enemy's right, which took them in flank as they hurried to the rear in the hopes of occupying a second and yet a third stockade they had erected, but the Column was soon in pursuit, and we found both unoccupied.

Continuing our career, we reached by evening a very large stockaded village, where only a few shots were fired at our advanced guard. It was a pitch-dark night, and we had to turn into any vacant house we could find. Being very tired, I lay down on the usual raised boarded floor of an exceedingly unpleasant-looking hut. I had not been half an hour asleep when I was awakened to sleep no more that night, for I was swarming with the most loathsome bugs and other equally horrible insects. Some of us had to get our heads shaved next morning and apply ointment, etc., for many days after, and it was altogether a nasty experience. We followed up the enemy for some days, sending flying parties east and west, but they had had a sharp lesson, and made no further stand for the time being.

During the movement through the valley an incident occurred which gives an idea of the uselessness of the untrained irregular troops of Native Princes. As I said before, the Maharaja of Munipore had with a great flourish of trumpets sent some eight hundred men to accompany our Column; I had marched up with two hundred of this extraordinary-looking soldiery, so could form some sort of



THE BUGLES SOUNDED THE CHARGE

DRAWING BY LADY HELEN GRAHAM

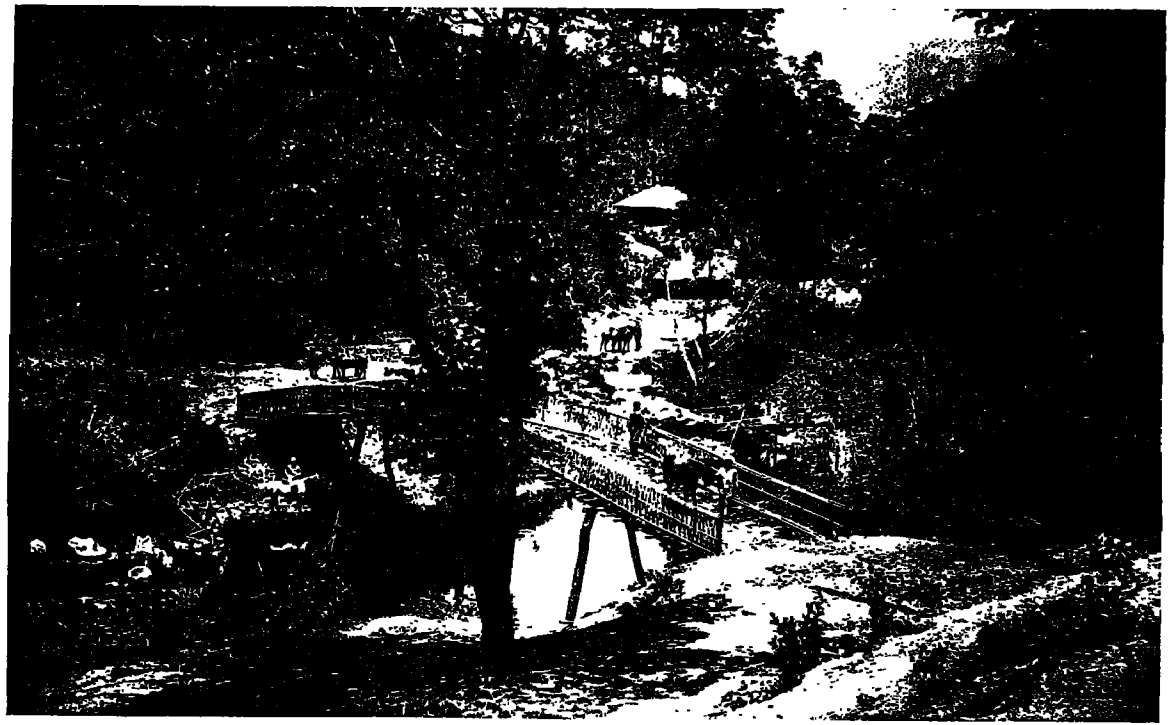
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idea of their fighting qualities and discipline. One day we were halted for rest and food, and, as usual, the Native officer commanding the Munipuris was warned that we should start again in half an hour; up to that time they had given no trouble, being quite contented to be left alone and march behind our own rear-guard, but this day they came to the conclusion that they had had enough of campaigning, and must have two hours' halt at least. Acting on this principle all ranks (who are Hindus, and most of them claim to be the highest caste of Brahmins) piled arms, unrobed, and proceeded to clean up their brass cooking pots as if time was of no consequence. I knew their habits, and that in the ordinary course of events it would be two or three hours before they were ready to march again; so I reported the matter to the Officer Commanding the Force, and by his orders I warned the Munipuri commandant that serious trouble would result to him if he did not immediately assemble his rabble and fall in. He, however, only deigned to reply that he and not I was in command of his noble army. In accordance with my instructions I then sounded the "fall in," but this was greeted by loud laughter; however, I was only giving them a chance, and they would not take it. An hour had by this time elapsed, and our rear-guard was about to move off; any further delay on the part of the auxiliaries would have meant that they might be attacked when isolated from us, and that would spell disaster for them, and do an immense amount of harm to our cause, especially just after our recent successes. Further, it was known that the enemy only intended to fight again if good fortune brought the Munipore troops their way. I returned to the river's bank, where crowds of bright shiny brass pots showed that the polishing part of the culinary arrangements alone had so far been completed. I was attended by my faithful Sikh orderly, Jwala Singh, alone, but he had by this time in his hands a couple of long green rattans, which he assured me were "better than any bugle calls," and taking one each we attacked the cooking army on both flanks simultaneously. The effect was

absolutely magical; headed by the commander and his subordinate officers the entire crowd rose and charged into the bush; but it was necessary not only to disperse, but to punish our friends, and thus teach them a lesson for future guidance; so we continued our movement, and were quite unexpectedly joined by a hitherto untouched reserve in the shape of a little Gurkha orderly, who had seen the combat and could not resist having a share in it. Drawing his kukry (curved heavy knife worn by all Gurkhas) and shouting with laughter he waved it over his head, and immediately stampeded any of those who were not within the reach of myself and Jwala Singh. Within ten minutes the brass pots and pans had been gathered up, their contents hurled on the ground, and the Munipore army had fallen in, in the shortest time on record. I rejoined our own Column, and I never saw the Royal troops attempt to delay the march again.

By the time that General Gordon transferred his head-quarters to Tummoo the long rainy season had come to an end, and a régime of energy and thoroughness at once set in; he was much pleased with the new road which I had made as far as the Lokchao, and which had been carried on beyond that river by Lieutenant Daly, of the 42nd Gurkhas. The first thing he gave orders for was a regular daily post, to be carried by Punjab muleteers mounted on local ponies, between Munipore and Burmah; this was soon arranged, and thereafter the post arrived daily and regularly at Tummoo. The General himself visited Kendat, crossing the Ungoching Hills with the 44th Gurkhas, and occupied certain posts on the Upper Chindwin River. His next journey was across the little-known country due east from Tummoo to the Chindwin, and on this occasion I had the pleasure of accompanying him.

The late Colonel Woodthorpe, C.B., Royal Engineers, so well known in India, was at this time surveying the Kubo Valley, and on one occasion he and I had a very unpleasant experience together. He carried as part of his equipment a collapsible Berthon boat, and being camped with his escort



IMPROVED BRIDGE OVER LOKCHAO RIVER

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near the Chindwin he asked me to cross the river with him for some exercise. We got across, and landing near a small village proceeded to the Poongye Chaung, or priest's residence. A crowd at once collected round us, and two men began to pull the boat ashore. Imagining there might be treachery, I quietly asked him what he thought it meant; he seemed very puzzled himself, but being a man of great experience, who had often faced every kind of Easterns under all sorts of circumstances, told me not to take any notice, but gradually edge down towards the river's bank. The followers of Buddha, however, did not mean to let us get away quite so easily, and began examining everything we possessed; watches, knives, field-glasses, all came in for a minute inspection; at last things were getting unpleasant, and we began to cast our eyes towards the boat, which by this time had been hauled ashore. Putting our hands in our trouser pockets we got out the little cash we had and offered it to the Poongye; but this last move was nearly our undoing, for the crowd seemed to grow very excited, and demanded that we should show our trouser pockets, from which silver appeared to emerge in such mysterious fashion. There was nothing to be done but to submit to this further inquisitiveness, which, however, only led to still increased annoyance, for Woodthorpe had on a loose pair of dark corduroy riding-breeches, and these so took the imagination of the villagers, that they demanded that he should make a present of them to the Poongye.

Jack Burman, as I said before, is not a "first-class fighting man," but he can, of course, do as he pleases in such circumstances as we were now placed in. Keeping his temper most admirably, and pretending to treat the whole matter as a joke, but with a very determined look on his face, Woodthorpe made towards the boat, and, notwithstanding that we were rather hustled, we reached it together, pushed it into the water and shoved off. I certainly expected a volley would be fired into us, and was very glad to get out of range safely. Whether it was a jest, we never knew, but if so it was a far too practical one.

During December, 1886, and January, 1887, several raids were made on villages, and in the latter month our Post at Oktong was attacked by tribesmen from the Eastern Chin Hills; but by this time General Gordon had made such arrangements as precluded all possibility of any combined armed resistance to our authority, and thus, after eight months of hard work and incessant trials, bravely borne by the troops, the Kubo Valley settled down to yet another of the peaceful portions of the British Empire.

After settling many military and political questions in conjunction with the civil authorities, General Gordon left Imphal in March, 1887, on his return to Shillong—regretted by officers and men; and, perhaps, the only person who was pleased was that double-faced scoundrel, Tongal, General of the Munipore army, and *de facto* ruler of the state, who told me after his departure that he was afraid of our Big Commander, because he asked for what he required in so quiet and forcible a manner that the Durbar were always obliged to give in, lest any excuses might rouse his wrath; and the wily old man would shrug his shoulders and say, "I do not like that sahib when he is angry."

With the departure of the General active operations practically ceased, but hard work never ceases in the Transport Department of a Field Force; so the Convoys moved as usual, and the enduring beasts of burden, and their equally enduring caretaker, toiled on for a few months more, until the bulk of the troops were withdrawn and the civil authorities found it possible to relieve the congeneric, though perhaps ruder and more practical, military power. Active service during the rainy season in countries like Munipore and the north-western parts of Burmah must perforce tell on the constitution of Europeans, and under the conditions in which this expedition had to be carried out, it is extraordinary that those of us on Transport duty ever kept our health at all. In my own case the incessant strain of marching in almost continuous wet, seldom having a dry change of clothing to put on, living on food of the poorest description, absent for days and weeks from any kind of medical assistance, and



GENERAL SIR JOHN GORDON, K.C.B.

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generally without comrades to cheer one, all combined to give me the first knock-down blow I had on Service.

During the operations in Kubo I had received an injury in my leg from a bamboo spike. It was exceedingly painful, though at first I thought little of it; but on my return journey to Munipore, owing to leech and mosquito bites, it developed into a very bad sore and allowed me no rest by night or day. There was no one else to do my work so I had to do it myself. I had to ride great distances, my leg being bandaged in tow, and my foot was so swollen that I was obliged to use a piece of bamboo hoop instead of a stirrup-iron. The last ten days I was too weak to walk, and too worn out to care much what happened, and all this sort of thing does not make for health in such a land. I am thankful to say, however, I managed to stick to my work till I received orders to hand over my charge to another and return to Assam.

The day I left Munipore I inwardly vowed I would see it no more; yet four years later, almost to the day, I once more marched into its burning ruins and stood on the charred remains of the Residency, in which I had spent many happy, and some sad, days.

CHAPTER VII

1887–1889

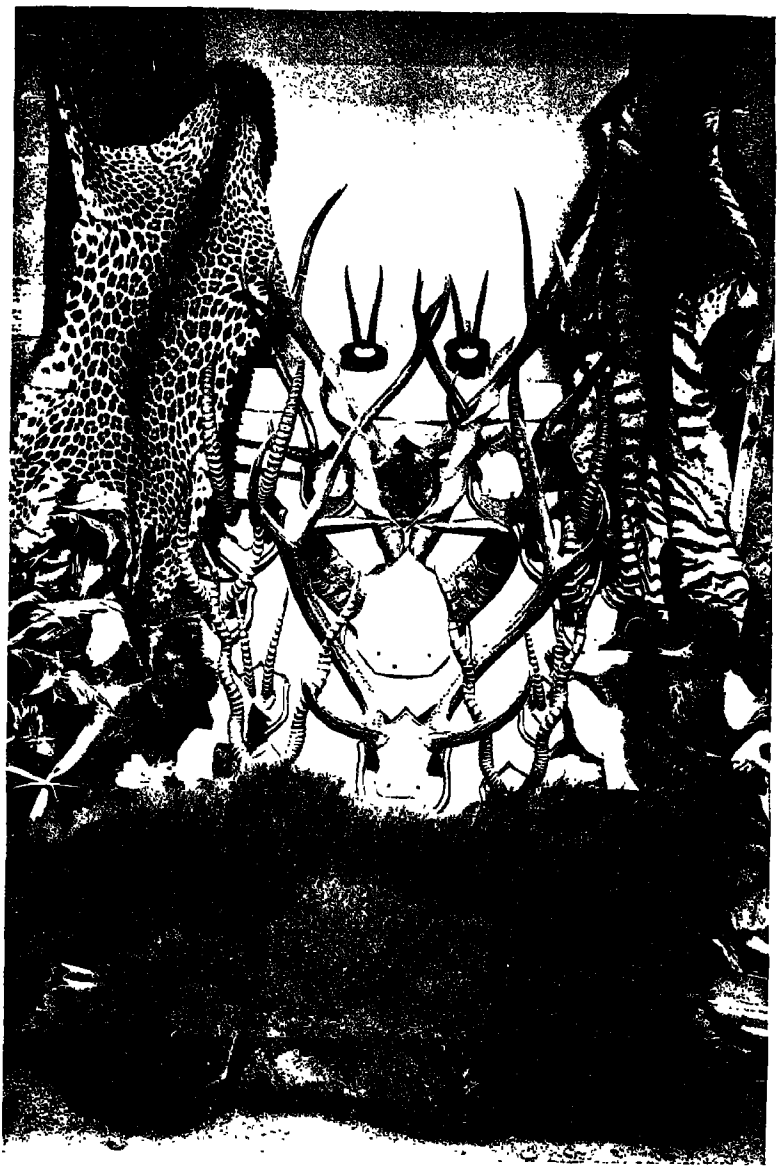
OUR INDIAN SOLDIERS—SIKHS—GURKHAS—RAJPUTS—BENGALIS—THE STATE OF MUNIPORE—BACK TO ASSAM—APPOINTED ADJUTANT—D.S.O.—CALCUTTA—MY MARRIAGE—AGRA

OF the various races which compose the Native Army of India, those with whom I have chiefly served in the Field are Sikhs, Gurkhas, and the men who fill the ranks of the Bengal regiments, viz. Mahomedans, Rajputs, Jats, and others. Much has been written regarding the comparative merits of these classes, and doubtless they vary considerably, if judged from a purely fighting point of view. By fighting, I mean the instinctive love of actual strife whilst that lasts. But it is only fair, before you judge a man's merits or demerits as a military atom, to consider all the trials he must perforce endure before he can be brought on to the field of battle, and how he endures them. Actions are only specks on the ocean of prolonged campaigns; but it is the long and wearying marches, the uninteresting convoy escorts, the unceasing round of guards and sentry-go, and other kindred duties which test, more than anything else, the strategical, so to speak, as compared with the tactical qualities of corps.

My personal experience has naturally been more of the foot soldier than the mounted branches, but I have also served with a great many Native Cavalry regiments and Mountain Batteries in various expeditions.

In the Indian Cavalry I do not think you find such marked differences between Class regiments as is the case in the Infantry arm.

The Native soldier of all classes appears to adapt himself more easily to the rôle of a *beau sabreur*, and as an observant onlooker it has always appeared to me that the Cavalry regiments do not vary nearly so much in efficiency as do the Infantry. In that, as in every branch of the



REMINDERS OF MANY HAPPY DAYS

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service, there are, and ever must be, some corps better than others, but I am speaking generally. That good officers make good corps, is what I firmly believe, whether it refers to the British, the Indian, or any other of the King's Forces; and probably if you took the officers from one of our best regiments and transferred them to one of the worst, of course with their own consent—supposing for the sake of argument such a thing to be possible—the results would be remarkable.

Doubtless such a statement would be met with the reply that the Non-commissioned officers and men have surely a very great deal to say to the efficiency and fighting value of every unit. True, a very great deal indeed to say to it; but I do not believe that the difference between corps consists in the quality of the material alone, but rather in the quality of those whose business it is to weld and shape that material into the form of a contented and smoothly working unit, fit and ready to take its place in the great living machinery which composes an army. If an officer joins a corps which has the reputation, rightly or wrongly, of not being considered fit to be placed in the forefront of battle, can it be expected that he will throw all his energies and life into his work, in the same manner as will another, no better maybe than himself, whose good fortune it has been to join a corps which is generally believed to be one that will be sent wherever hard fighting is expected. Qualities which are not fostered, but allowed to lie dormant, must, in soldiering as well as in everything else, deteriorate and eventually become extinct.

Amongst those of whom I am now writing, fortunately, however, the martial spirit is still as strong as ever it was, and it has been, and is being, cultivated. There were many opinions freely expressed as to the wisdom, or otherwise, of the disbanding of many of the regiments of the Bengal Army some ten or twelve years ago. But anyone who knew those regiments as they were, and who has seen those that have since replaced them, can have no doubt of the immense benefit which has resulted to the Army as a whole. The old corps had lost their fighting spirit, and knew they were regiments merely in name. I was present at the last parade

of one of them, a corps which had done well in its day, but that day was then past. In the ranks were many good soldiers, but nearly all these had the opportunity of continuing to serve in regiments of their own class; whilst a very large percentage were glad to get away at any cost; they did not want to serve, and were only doing so for their pensions—a common enough thing in those days, when many of the men seemed to think the end and object of all soldiering was the pension which awaited them.

A Hindustani sepoy whom I once rebuked for slackness and general slovenliness promptly said, "Sir, I have only one year more to serve for my pension, what can it matter how I turn out, or what I do?" and in some corps that was becoming too general a principle.

All classes and castes have certain good and some bad traits, the same as may be seen in English, Scotch, and Irish regiments. The Sikh is brave to a fault in action, is, perhaps, the most soldierly-looking man in the King's Armies, possesses loyalty in its best form, and is one of nature's gentlemen! On the other hand he is parsimonious in the extreme, and is a difficult soldier to deal with when sick. I have known many of them who would dare almost anything, become absolute children when smitten down with illness. Their Commissariat in countries where none of their own forms of food supply exist is a serious question, and makes their employment in large numbers impossible. I had only 100 Sikhs with me in Ashanti in 1900, and though it was then worth any endeavour to keep them fit, for they formed the backbone of our Force, it would have been impossible to employ any large numbers, owing to the amount of transport necessary, and the difficulty of keeping up their rations, which had all to be imported from India. But when all their good and bad points have been weighed in the balance, there is a great charm in working with Sikhs.

You feel, instinctively, that you are commanding hereditary soldiers; you are certain they will never fail you in the hour of trial; you can read in their manly faces the traditions of a martial race; and if it has been your good fortune to witness

them in the charge, and to hear their warlike cry of the Khalsa, then you can hardly fail to be convinced that the Sikh is a soldier of the very highest order.

The feeding of Gurkhas is a less difficult matter; they live more on the principle of take what you can get and be thankful. In the Kubo Valley in Burmah, the gallant little fellows seemed contented with anything, and the conduct of the 42nd and the 44th Gurkhas, under extraordinary trials, was a lesson in discipline. These battalions have since been much improved, under more auspicious circumstances, and are now purely Gurkha Corps like the rest of those regiments; but, nevertheless, no one could have failed to be impressed, even in 1886, with the stout material they had in their ranks. The Gurkha's pluck is proverbial, his nature generous, and he will not brook insult or wrong. A Gurkha regiment is a body which most men would sooner fight along with than against.

In sickness he is more sullen, and requires less comforts than any Native soldier I have met; he is active beyond all the races of India, and can help himself under difficulties probably better than any fighting man in the world.

My first intimate acquaintance on Service with any but Punjab regiments was in Burmah in 1886. There we had the 4th Bengal Infantry, and I saw a great deal of them in all sorts of circumstances, and the recollections of that time are most pleasant ones. A great number of the men were Brahmins and other high-caste Hindus, and these I had been led to believe were not a desirable class on field service. My own experience soon convinced me that with tact such as was shown by their officers, these men would soon break through any of the traditions, unfortunately so binding on them, and which, as far as I could see, were the chief stumbling-blocks to their being classed with the best corps. In Burmah they gradually assimilated themselves to their surroundings; the most treasured customs were abandoned to meet the ever varying circumstances, and before I had done many marches with them I felt I was working with men who meant business whenever it should come their

way. Often underfed, underclothed, and unhoused, the companies of the 4th Bengal Infantry displayed the best qualities of soldiers; and though cholera and other forms of sickness took heavy toll of the regiment, it was an honourable record, which any Subaltern joining it may be proud of. The Hindustani sepoy, perhaps, has not that about him which catches the eye of an onlooker so quickly as does the appearance of some of his brothers in arms; but those who know and study him, who will make of him a comrade in reality and not only in name, who will convince him that he is amongst the best of soldiers, and who will stick to him in quarters and in camp, will find that as he did in the past when he was making the history of British India, so to-day he can take his place in the van of the fight, and can be as loyal and brave as our best.

I never served in the Native Army, but I have seen all classes and kinds of corps in many lands, and have lived with them and worked with them, and hence can speak perfectly impartially. You cannot serve for seventeen years in India without seeing much that disabuses you of many accepted theories, and they cannot have much power of winning from men their best attributes who continually point to this class and that as inferior material. Allowed that certain races are by nature meant for fighting men, there are still, I maintain, many others which can be made into good soldiers; and as for India, there history has established the fact that the material is plentiful; what is necessary is the best British officers and an equal chance of Service to all.

Take the case of the campaign in China in 1900; there were regiments of all classes. In the march to the relief of the Legations, the 1st Bengal Cavalry, the 1st Sikhs, and the 7th Rajputs (Bengal Infantry) vied with one another, and there was probably little to choose between them; yet in their ranks were men of all castes and creeds. The British officers knew and trusted their men, and the results were what they will ever be under similar circumstances.

So much for the Native Army, and if anyone in that army

should happen to read these pages I hope he will at least credit me with being a wholly impartial observer.

Munipore, as I knew it in 1886–7, was one of the last survivals of the old-world Native States of India. It had a Political Agent with the usual escort from some Native regiment; the usual army of red-coated Chuprasies and other symbols of British supervision; the Union Jack floated from the Residency flagstaff, and a certain number of guns were fired whenever the representative of the Sovereign left or arrived at Imphal, the Capital; all told that the far-reaching arm of England had to be reckoned with, but there practically began and ended our hold over the country. The people had their own laws, and appeared quite content to be left alone; the Maharaja and his myrmidons lived in comfort and played polo regularly. The Lalup (feudal) system furnished labour for the roads, etc.—if anything in that country in those days could correctly be styled a road! —living was ridiculously cheap; few ever left the valley or had any desire to do so. On their east they were protected, more or less, from Burmese raids by the knowledge that the British Government would assist them: on the west they had our garrisons in the Naga Hills and in Cachar, to pounce immediately on those who attempted to break the peace. Military service was more nominal than practical; moral laws, as we know them, existed only in an infinitesimal degree, and, in short, Munipore and its people were a small world in themselves, neither seeking nor desiring any outward interference. They might have remained so till to-day had it not been for the murders committed in 1891; but that is another story.

Mrs. Grimwood, in her interesting book, *My Three Years in Munipore*, has given excellent descriptions of the life, manners, and customs of the people; all that I wish to refer to is the relations between the British officials—Civil and Military—and the Durbar or the Native State as represented by the Maharaja and his family. When I first arrived in Munipore, in 1886, the Political Agent was dying, and the senior military officer was acting for him. It was probably

owing to the above fact that during this time the Durbar was, if anything, more apathetic than ever. I never knew greater arrogance or more intolerable swagger than that indulged in by the representatives of the Maharaja at the frequent Durbars held in the Residency or at the palace; instead of being at least respectful, these nincompoops appeared to think they were doing us a favour by attending at all, and so to every request the same answer was given, "It is impossible." Our Acting Agent invariably answered, "It must be done, so there is an end of it," but I own I often longed to break up the assemblage summarily.

However, one way or another, we generally got what we wanted in the end, though I was the chief sufferer who had to put up with endless annoyances, as most of the business connected with the Durbar referred to the transport of stores or troops.

During one of my journeys to Tummoo and the Kubo Valley I was informed that some two hundred carriers would meet me at Pullel to help a large lot of stores up the steep hill just beyond that place. On arrival it was raining hard, and not a single carrier could I see; my business was urgent, as our garrison was very short of food and medicine, and my temper in those days was not saintly; so taking two sepoys with me I stealthily approached what looked like an empty house in the apparently deserted village, and knocked at the door; no answer! I felt sure there was somebody in it, as I saw smoke coming through the thatched roof; having kicked the door several times, I burst open the bar, when a regular rush for the only exit took place. I seized two men, and when the others saw my two armed sepoys outside they pulled up, and, as it were, surrendered. I had thus secured about eight men, but I wanted two hundred, so I ordered the owner of the house to shout out as loud as he was able that the white officer was going to shoot him unless all the others immediately fell in. What the unhappy householder said I never knew, but he yelled as if he thoroughly meant what he was saying, and within half an hour I was on my way with the full number

of carriers. When we reached the next stage, these same men all volunteered to do another march, as I had paid the cash into their own hands instead of through the Durbar officials. In all eastern countries I have as far as possible adopted this plan, and during this very expedition I have time after time known whole villages turn out and work on the roads, even when I was well aware the State officials were employing their soldiers to prevent the people from assisting us.

It is frequently a somewhat peculiar characteristic of the subordinate Oriental office-holder, especially if his tenure of office is only of temporary duration, that not only does he desire to retain everybody else's rightful dues in the shape of money, but he appears to think that nobody but himself has any real interest as to what becomes of the cash. Acting on this principle, he generally manages to line his pockets very comfortably, producing receipts and vouchers so carefully concocted and perfectly completed that it would puzzle a City accountant to detect any flaw.

The powers of the State in those days actually rested with two Generals, Tongal and Bulram; Bulram died before the rebellion of 1891, but Tongal lived to be hanged on the polo ground where I had often played the game watched by the crafty old man. He was as astute an Oriental as ever had dealings with British officials, and it required considerable insight into the Hindu character to fathom his motives and understand his actions. At one time it was even whispered that he was the veritable Nana Sahib of Cawnpore infamy, but this was probably concocted to create a sensation. On one occasion he had promised to provide a large quantity of rice on a certain date for our troops; the day came, but no rice, and another two days followed; our supply was nearly exhausted, and at last I went to his house to see him, a thing I had never done before. I hardly expected to hear he was at home, but to my surprise I was ushered in, and found myself in a large courtyard with two sentries on guard. I followed my guide into a room, and then into a verandah, where I was offered a seat. I waited a few moments, when

the great man appeared, and asking most suavely after my health, said, "About these supplies, I am just going into the courtyard to see the contractor, and I will return in a few moments." I waited again, and this time appeared on the scene no veteran General, but a very smartly dressed young lady in the national dress, viz. a kind of sack of rich material, fastened under the arms and reaching a little below the knees; her hair was cut straight across her forehead in a fringe, showing she was unmarried, and she was not in the least abashed. The interpreter informed me she had come to say that Tongal had been suddenly sent for by the Maharaja, but if I would wait he would soon be back. Not being at all inclined to leave under the circumstances, I took my seat, whilst my fair friend sat down on the floor.

She occasionally looked up at me and said something, but it was all Greek to me. I must have waited half an hour, when I came to the conclusion that old Tongal had outwitted me once more, so bidding adieu to the lady, I departed. Some days afterwards I met him near the palace, and I was about to ask him what he meant, when he smiled his oft-practised smile and asked me whether I did not think "his daughter" a nice-looking girl. It was no use bringing up the story of the rice, and so I said, "Yes, but she is far too good-looking to be your daughter."

After the death of Major Trotter, Mr. A. J. Primrose, of the Indian Civil Service, took up the duties of Political Agent, and I have seldom spent more pleasant days than in his company in the old Residency. Christmas was celebrated in princely style; bands, dinners, and nautches—and in truth the nautches were worth seeing; none of the monotonous, prolonged, tiresome gyrations of Indian nautch girls to discordant beat of drum, but really elegant movements, danced by pretty girls in smart costumes. They all knew it, too, and some of them were the daughters of the highest-caste men in the state; it not being considered by any means *infra dig.* to take part in such amusements.

Whenever duty brought me back to Munipore from across the Burmese borders, and a day could be spared, I invariably

spent it shooting. Duck, geese, and snipe were to be found in thousands all over the valley, and there is probably no country in the world where better shooting of this description can be indulged in; the only difficulty was to find sufficient cartridges to keep up the supply.

I once accompanied the Senaputty (Commander-in-Chief) on a tiger-shooting expedition. We left Imphal (the Capital) about two p.m., and proceeded by water in dug-out canoes for several hours. Darkness came on, and with it mosquitoes and other torments of such countries; I spent the night in attempting to keep them off, but all to little purpose, and morning saw me a miserable creature, with frightfully disfigured face and hands. It would have been impossible to put up a curtain as it was blowing, and there was hardly room to move in the boat. Arrived on the scene of operations I found a large crowd, who had built up a rough network of bamboos and canes some hundred yards in diameter, inside of which, in high grass, they reported three tigers were enclosed.

I was led to a machan, or seat, built upon a most rickety foundation of four bamboos, overlooking the enclosure, and the Senaputty was on the opposite side, surrounded by several spearmen and gun-bearers; I noticed that his machan, unlike mine, was a most substantial one. After a while the beat began by the hauling of an immense log, fastened at the ends to ropes, which was gradually pulled over the grass by main force; the ends of the ropes passed through the openings in the enclosure, and the men heaving were outside, and hence quite safe. But inside the enclosure were many men armed with spears and firebrands; these, I must say, appeared to me to be in imminent danger of being suddenly charged and seized by the tigers as soon as they should discover their real position; however, they stuck together, with lances poised, and behaved most pluckily. Gradually the log lowered the high grass, and the spearmen advanced shoulder to shoulder. It was safe enough for me, but at the same time most exciting, as the Senaputty had his rifle pointed in my direction, and apparently had every

intention of firing as soon as the tigers should appear. Now it is bad enough to have a loaded gun pointed in your direction even for a moment, but when the operation lasts for a quarter of an hour, and the gun is in the hands of a man who holds the lives of others cheap, it is decidedly awkward. This was my position. As for the beaters, had he fired he must, it seemed, assuredly have hit one of them, as tigers and beaters were by this time getting circumscribed into a very small space.

Expectation was very soon satisfied, for a head suddenly appeared only fifteen yards from me, a large tigress gave me one angry look, and then, as if in desperation, knowing her sad plight, sprang in my direction. One bullet killed her dead. And now began a most amusing scene, viz. the capture of her three well-grown cubs; they fought and struggled gamely, but in a few moments had been enveloped in nets and carried off in triumph. The Senaputty generously offered me the skin, as well as one of the cubs, but there his generosity ended, for, of course, I never saw either.

My time in Munipore, like everything else, came to an end, and during the last few days I had interviews with several of the leading merchants and officials, with whom I had become well acquainted during my residence. They all had the same story to tell: the high-handedness of the Durbar, the injustice of the Tongal General, the iniquities of all in authority; but such stories are so common in India that I put them down to the usual causes, viz. the unsoundness of the entire machinery of the Government.

A few years later I was to have ocular proof of the inevitable end of states built on rotten foundations, and bolstered up by British bayonets alone. I returned to my old Eastern Frontier Station of Golaghat, where I remained six months, generally renovating the Transport. There were few opportunities for shooting as the rainy season was in full swing, but I visited Shillong twice and got some polo. This is the most remote and hence least frequented of the Indian hill stations, but in my opinion it is one of the best.

There is not much officialdom, and a visitor feels himself free to do as he pleases. The European inhabitants of Shillong lived a fine healthy life; there were good polo and cricket grounds, capital driving roads which passed through charming wild scenery, a pack of hounds and good riding country, and if you add that all these were to be found at an elevation of some 5,000 feet, that the climate was in consequence remarkably healthy, and that hospitality was unbounded, you get a very good idea of a place to spend a happy ten days in, when leave was to be had or duty took you to the local Elysium.

Shillong has since those days suffered a terrible calamity, the earthquake of 1897 having levelled nearly the entire station. But I am told it has quite recovered itself, that everything has been or is being rebuilt, and that far from being a sufferer, the beautiful spot in the Khasia Hills is as flourishing as ever; that polo and cricket have been revived with renewed energy, and that dancing and other amusements indulged in by the ladies are more popular than ever, whilst the dancers themselves are of course as fair as ever Shillong boasted. Mr. (now Sir William) Ward of the Indian Civil Service was in those days Chief Commissioner of Assam, and the Residency was proverbial for its entertainments of every kind; no one, indeed, could visit the place without receiving at the hands of Lady Ward some kindness in its best forms, and few ever left it without regret.

Whilst at Golaghat I received offers of two tempting appointments, both of which I was asked to reply to immediately. One was to remain on in the then newly amalgamated Commissariat-Transport Department, but for Transport work alone, as I had stipulated to remain only on this condition. If I accepted this I was to remain on a separate list and be employed first in raising a new corps of hill men from the Garo Hills, to be utilised chiefly during field operations, and after that my services were to be utilised wherever there might be active service or other special duty.

The second was from the Colonel of my regiment, offering

me the appointment of Adjutant, which was about to become vacant.

Now merely looking to immediate material prospects, there was no comparison as to which was the best to choose; the Transport appointment meant good pay, great freedom of action, and constant opportunities of active service. It also furnished great scope for initiative, and placed on one much responsibility—two of the choicest gifts that could be offered to any man. On the other hand it cut me off from purely military duties, kept me away during peace time from contact with soldiers, and buried me in remote places where the fierce light of the Indian War Office never shone.

The acceptance of the appointment of Adjutant meant very considerably reduced pay and increased expenses—important points for a poor man! It meant worse, for it killed initiative except in details; and it transferred responsibility on to other shoulders, viz. those of the Commanding Officer, and this was what I felt most. It substituted slavery for freedom of action, but what it demanded was control of temper, incessant watchfulness in the performance of duty, and a thorough knowledge of all details, without which it is impossible to command men satisfactorily. In short it was an appointment which in my humble estimation every officer should seek to hold at some time of his life, and if he has once successfully filled it he need not be afraid of misunderstanding the hearts of his officers and men—an all-important point.

Anyhow the choice had to be made, and like Mary I chose what I thought was the better (albeit poorer) part, and joined my regiment at Fort William, Calcutta. Twice during my service have I been exactly similarly situated; for on return from the Ashanti Campaign in 1901 I was given the offer of Inspecting Officer of the whole of the West African Frontier Forces, with liberal pay, higher rank, and much freedom and responsibility; but I thought it wise once more to return to the folds of the War Office, under whose shadow (though that shadow had in my case been a very long drawn out one) I had lived my life.

Again pecuniary loss was the immediate result; but whilst our eyes are fixed on the stars we must remember that our feet are still on the earth.

Two days before rejoining the regiment I heard the news that I had been given the D.S.O. for Burmah.

The duties of Adjutant, especially in a place like Fort William, took up the whole of one's time; on every side you were overlooked by the Headquarters Staff of the Army, from the Commander-in-Chief downwards; on every parade of the battalion the eyes of those who decide the fate of Commanding Officers or Adjutants and others were fixed.

The circumscribed drill-ground was within a stone's-throw of all who could make or mar the individuals assembled thereon; and whilst veterans and recruits carried out their eternal exercises and drills, smart equipages rolled in at one great gate of the Fort and out at another; Lieutenant-Governors and Members of Council, judges and merchants, it might be one or more of these, but each must perforce see, and all may criticise, the soldiers on parade. My meaning is that in Fort William the battalion was ever under the public eye; and the public are apt to forget the temptations cast in the path of soldiers quartered in a trying and enervating climate, and within a mile of one of the largest eastern cities with a very considerable European population.

I have always had an idea, maybe a false one, that the sins of omission or commission of the Irish soldier loom larger to the world in general than do those of his kindred islanders. I think the reason is that the Irish soldier is more simply constituted by nature and therefore less quick at disguising his faults; when he has perhaps imbibed more liquor than is good for him, he will not wisely retire to places unfrequented by Provost Sergeants and other limbs of the military law, but he frequently selects the most likely spots to lead to his detection. As Adjutant I saw the men at every hour of the day, and in most places to which soldiers resort, whether in or out of barracks; I could not but note their failings, but I saw much to admire in their

virtues. I learnt what to avoid in dealing with them, and much that I had previously tried to avoid I found it sounder to probe and not shun; and at the end of my term of office I can honestly say that I was a better man—a better judge of human nature as it is, and not as it is sometimes painted—than when I first became Adjutant. As for the men they were physically a splendid unit, to which many most distinguished soldiers have borne witness; as genial comrades they will ever live in the hearts of those who have served with them; and as Irishmen they have in South Africa furnished but one more proof of the loyalty with which the fighting classes enlisted in the Emerald Isle serve the King.

Whilst quartered at Calcutta I always kept three or four polo ponies, and had every opportunity of playing regularly. The ground was a very good one, and well looked after. I played in the Calcutta team for the Cup Tournament, when the Maharaja of Cooch Behar, Major Hunt, of the 7th Hussars, Mr. George Walker, of Calcutta, and myself formed the team. We won our matches against the Behar planters, and found ourselves in for the final against the 17th Lancers. After a very close finish we were only just beaten. Large crowds watched the game, which was the most exciting I ever played in.

Four months during 1888 were spent in passing the course for promotion at the Garrison Class at the hill station of Nynee Tal, in the Himalayas. I took up my polo ponies, and they proved a constant source of amusement and exercise. I have always found that work of any kind becomes easier and more enjoyable if at the close of the day you can finish up with hard exercise of some sort.

During the winter of 1888 I was given the acting appointment of Deputy-Assistant Quartermaster-General at Calcutta for two months, during the absence of the permanent incumbent, and thus had a fresh chance of improving my knowledge of Staff duties.

In April, 1889, I proceeded on leave to the Central Provinces, and one day, whilst camped not far from Saugor, met a party of Non-commissioned officers and men of the

Royal Warwickshire Regiment, who were out on a few days' shooting leave; one of them was a Corporal, by name Mulgrue, a man of noticeable intelligence and soldierly bearing, who much impressed me. We had a long conversation, and I inwardly vowed if I ever had an opportunity I would try and secure his services in the Field. I also told him to write to me if he ever cared to do so. We parted on our different ways; but I had made a mental note of Mulgrue, which eleven years later stood both him and me in good stead. In 1900 he was serving on the permanent staff of the Militia, and I was commanding the Force in Ashanti; he wrote to me, and I wired home asking for his services, which were sanctioned, and we met once again in Kumassi, thousands of miles from the scene of our first acquaintance. I appointed him garrison Sergeant-Major, and a smarter man for the work, which was varied and needed much tact, could not have been found. He has since been promoted to a commission, and is now Adjutant of the Gold Coast Volunteers. Thus a good sportsman often proves his worth as a soldier; not by reason alone of his fondness for sport, but rather because by his keenness in the pursuit of it he shows he is possessed of other than stay-at-home qualities; that he prefers the freedom of the forests to the alcoholic atmosphere of the canteen, and that he is blessed with nerve and energy beyond the average of his comrades. Let people say what they will, the love of sport and adventure is, and will ever remain, one of the best qualifications of the British officer and soldier to maintain the high reputation he now holds in the armies of the world.

In 1889, I was married to the second daughter of Colonel George Way, C.B., who was then in command at Saugor, and the next month proceeded to Agra to take up the duties of Station Staff Officer, to which I had just been gazetted. The Deputy-Assistant Adjutant-General of the district was about to proceed on leave when I arrived, and I had the good fortune to have his duties as well as my own to perform.

My brother, who was then a Colonel in the Indian Medical

Service, was at this time Civil Surgeon of Agra, and thus I had my first opportunity of meeting any of my brothers at my own station. It was a source of great interest accompanying him round his splendidly-kept hospitals, jail, and dispensaries. He was universally acknowledged to be one of the best doctors in India, and was in addition a very keen sportsman, and whenever we could manage it we spent a day together shooting. He has now left the Service, of which he was so great an ornament, but the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh will long remember him for his innumerable acts of kindness to the poor and suffering.

CHAPTER VIII

1889–1890

THE CHIN-LUSHAI EXPEDITION—THE PANCHAUNG YUAMAS—ATTACKED BY THE CHINS—THE CHINBOKS—APPOINTED TO ARMY STAFF—DELHI

MY stay at Agra was to be but of short duration, for hardly had we settled down in our first house when I was once again ordered to proceed on active service as Intelligence Officer in the Quartermaster-General's department. This time it was to be the Chin-Lushai country, between India and Burmah, where many Columns were operating against those semi-savages. I reached Mandalay by way of Calcutta and Rangoon, and was there ordered to await instructions. The district was commanded by Brigadier-General (now Sir William) Gatacre, and having known him previously at Calcutta, when he was Acting Quartermaster-General of the Army, I had the good luck to work temporarily on his staff. His proverbial energy and love of hard work had made many changes in the district, and his dislike of all that savours of slothfulness had, it was generally admitted, speedily got rid of certain useless individuals.

Before Christmas, 1889, I received orders to join the Column which was then being formed for the exploration of the Chinbok country, the recovery of many captive British subjects, and the punishment of the Chins for continual raiding. This portion of Chinland lies to the south of the mountains in which the force under Brigadier-General Symons (afterwards Major-General Sir Penn Symons, who was killed at Talana Hill) was then operating.

After a most interesting journey by steamer to Pokoko, at the confluence of the Irrawaddy and Chindwin rivers, and then overland *viâ* Pauk to Chaungu (Yaw), I joined the punitive force which consisted of the Chin Frontier Levy, mostly Punjab Sepoys, many being old soldiers who had

campaigned in many lands. Captain Rainey, of the Madras Staff Corps, was in command of the battalion, with Lieutenant Daly, of the 42nd Gurkhas, who had helped me in my road-making in Munipore during 1886, as his second in command; Lieutenant Tighe, D.S.O., who had formerly belonged to my own regiment, was also one of the attached officers, so I found myself amongst friends. We were altogether a very happy party, ready and anxious for any amount of hard work, and that was ahead of us in plenty.

The journey from Pokoko to Yaw had not been without amusing incidents. Some of the villages I passed through had never seen a white man, so they told me; and at one time I was met by the women alone, who asked me to take everything they possessed, but to spare the men, who had all hidden in the jungles on hearing of my approach. Once reassured, they sent out some of their number and recalled the runaways; one old woman severely rebuked them for their cowardice, and to show her utter contempt gave a fine strapping young fellow amongst them a stinging box on the ear, which he took very mildly and without a wince. At another village I turned out the cattle from a hut to make room for myself, as it was raining; I had just completed my toilet when a young vixen, the owner of the animals, entered the hut, and brandishing a stick ordered me to quit. It was of no use arguing with her, for she only grew more furious, and at last I had to eject her forcibly, but not before she had smashed my only lantern.

We crossed the frontiers on the last day of the year, and entered what was then, perhaps, one of the most primitive lands in existence.

Our means of transport consisted of elephants, ponies, and Burmese carriers, and the mobile Column was five hundred strong, without useless impedimenta of any kind. The elephants were left at the foot of the hills, and the ponies were only taken as far as they could travel at a fair pace without incommoding the Column. We carried no tents, and only the lightest possible baggage. Marching across a beautifully wild country by the narrowest of paths,

through splendid forests of oak, chestnut, fir, and teak, we came on a village on the 3rd of January. During this march we never saw a soul, nor did we find any traces of habitations. Before occupying the village, however, we became aware that there was at least one living man in the country.

A punitive force marching in military order is not generally stopped by the presence of one single person as representing the enemy, but such was actually the case with us; for on reaching the top of a very steep climb we emerged into wide cultivated fields, and there, standing in the open within fifty yards of us, was an exceedingly quaint-looking savage; his clothing might easily have been made out of a pocket-handkerchief, with something to spare; his weapons consisted of a bow and arrow, with a quiver hanging from his right shoulder, and a knife fixed into a large flat bone at his side. As our advanced scout showed himself, the gallant ignoramus went down on one knee, strung his arrow, tried the bowstring, and very coolly informed the Sikh that if he budged an inch he would immediately fire at him. Ordinarily, of course, our savage warrior would have immediately been shot, as poisoned arrows are nasty missiles, and cause death within two or three hours; but the whole thing seemed so ludicrous that our men would not fire, but halted. Presently some of our officers came up, and the interpreter (who had once been a captive) asked the man what he wanted, and also warned him that unless he immediately stowed away his arrow he might get an ounce or two of lead into him. Not a bit of it! the dusky foeman merely replied that he would keep his word, but thoughtfully added he had decided to give us a further few moments, during which we might make our preparations for retiring whence we had come; but after which time not only would he fire his own arrow, but would immediately call up several hundred archers as trusty as himself and drive us across his borders.

This story is no exaggeration, but simple fact, and I tell it as showing how only ten years ago on our Indian frontiers were to be found races who had no idea of the power of firearms, and who believed that their own bows and arrows

were invincible weapons. Stranger still is it that after many weeks of skirmishes and surprises these same people made a most daring attack on my personal survey escort in broad daylight, and rushed over and over again to within fifty, and even thirty, yards of our rifles.

The village was deserted, but the head-man and some others, after carrying on a conversation with us across a deep ravine, eventually plucked up sufficient courage to come into camp. They presented a weird appearance, and looked with awe on us white men, the first they had ever seen; our rifles were examined and explained to them, but they were not much impressed by them until I shot a goat some hundred yards away; this was too much for their feelings, and the head-man began to weep copiously. Our bayonets were what struck them most, and they grinned all over when a squad quickly fixed bayonets before them. They were quite convinced that their last hour had arrived; but after a tot of whisky and much discussion, they agreed to leave one of their number as a hostage, and to go and call in the head-man of their valley. As soon as the hostage found himself alone, surrounded by Sikhs, he made up his mind to run if possible, and showed it so unmistakably that we thought it wise to make him sleep in the guard hut. The doctor gave him blankets; he made a very hearty meal, and was beginning to recover his equilibrium, when all of a sudden the "first post of tattoo" was sounded by the buglers; this was the finishing stroke to our hostage; in it he fancied he recognised the last trump, and that his days were numbered. Coiling himself up into a heap he rolled on the ground, and, as the guard believed, was soon asleep.

To ensure his safety during the night a rope had been fastened round his waist, the other end being tied to the sentry. About midnight I was awakened by loud shouts and a general stampede of the whole camp. The Burmese coolies, like the arrant cowards they are, were rushing madly in every direction, and a state of pandemonium prevailed generally. When quiet was restored, we found our friend the Chin had unloosened his ropes, and holding them

firmly in his hand, had made one dart towards a cliff just below the guard shelter, and taking the whole thing with a flying leap, had carried the astonished sentry with him, but got away scot-free himself. It was cleverly done and we took care that it did not occur again.

We had now fairly entered these unknown mountains and the situation was a strange one; the people were so superstitious and ignorant, that before many days it became evident we should not get into communication with them by any ordinary means. My orders were to traverse and survey all the valleys, of which there are a great many, running east and west, with high ridges between. But the people of one valley had little to do with those of another; *Nats*, or supernatural spirits, were the protectors of all alike; but every village, nay, every individual, had one or more special Nat; every action of theirs, every thought, was supposed to emanate from them, or be guided by some unknown mysterious thing which for linguistic purposes was termed a "Nat." Blood for blood was an important part of their creed, and treachery was the basis of their military science.

For the first ten days we moved from one village to another, seldom seeing anybody except at long distances, where they fondly imagined themselves quite safe from rifle fire. But though we could not see, we had ample proofs that the Chins were about, for almost daily we suffered some casualties, the rear-guard generally being their favourite point to attack.

The Sikhs, as well as we officers, did not at all like this class of work, for it was totally different to any other form of fighting. An arrow speeds its way silently, it strikes something, and that is the first and only intimation you have of the presence of an enemy. Then, again, if it is poisoned the wound is frequently fatal; and worst of all, the Burmese carriers were a constant source of trouble, requiring large escorts to watch and guard them, and taking panic at every possible opportunity.

By the 15th January, 1890, Captain Rainey had succeeded in getting in several Chiefs and persuading them to submit

to the orders of Government, and as I was anxious to fill in as much of my survey work as possible in the northern valleys, I started that day in a westerly direction towards the Arracan Hills, with the intention of visiting the Panchaung Yuamas, or group of villages. I had an escort of fifty rifles, and a few days' extra rations for all ranks. It was a clear morning, and I could see the valleys of the Maung on my left thickly dotted with villages, the whole view presenting a striking scene. The path kept to the top of the ridge, dividing the Maung and Yaw streams, and mostly passed through rhododendrons, tall and straight firs and oak, with short grass undergrowth, whilst ferns and wild flowers grew in profusion. All nature seemed at rest; the sound of the distant waters, many hundreds of feet below, came as a refreshing reminder of other lands. The wind soughed through the tall fir trees, masses of rich orchids hung overhead, or climbed the rocks on every side; an occasional startled deer dashed across the path, and away to our extreme west rose the massive ridges lying between us and the Yomas of Arracan.

"All save the spirit of man seemed divine."

I halted the escort at a most inviting-looking spot. The discordant chatter of Sepoys and coolies could not be brooked at such a time, and in so beautiful a retreat; an order soon procured silence. The matter-of-fact plane table and compass should not desecrate so peaceful a scene for the first time since man was created, at any rate not until I had had time first to take in all its charms, and survey-work must wait. I lit a cigar, and turning my back on tripods and clinometers, gave way to reverie. Necessity demanded the presence of my fellow-men, but how I longed to be alone, the only possible way of communing with nature. Byron's lines came to mind:—

"I love not man the less, but nature more,
From these our interviews, in which I steal
From all I may be, or have been before,
To mingle with the universe, and feel
What I can ne'er express, yet cannot all conceal."

I must have lived some twenty minutes in this dream-land, when I was quickly recalled to earth by the vulgar sound of a drum borne across the valley; fixing my glasses I could see crowds of people running here and there between two villages and driving cattle and goats before them.

At least it was something to know there were people about, and presently the small Column was on its way again.

Night found me in a village down in a valley, the only place where I could discover water. We completely surprised the village, and could have shot most of the inhabitants, and had I known what was to follow, I should certainly have killed a few as a warning. Instead of that I shouted to them, through the interpreter, to remain quiet, as I had no intention of harming them or their village. Darkness came on, and having posted sentries and cut down as much grass round the huts as was possible in the time, with the labour available, I lay down in a huge bin of grain and was soon fast asleep. Life in savage countries is a succession of surprises, as I found when an hour later I heard shots, and jumping up found the grass valley below us on fire. The flames were rushing up at an alarming rate, the sky was reddened, and clouds of burning cinders hung over the bivouac. It was impossible to get away, as all round us was grass and dry bushes, so collecting in the centre of a field we waited.

Fortunately for us there was not much wind, and except that we felt the heat from the flames as they swept round the village, we were secure.

Once again I betook myself to my bed of grain, but rest was not to be, for the Panchaung Yuamas had determined to exterminate the white intruders, and from hour to hour the hum of voices told us that fresh levies were joining the would-be destroyers of my small escort. The clanging of war drums was mingled with the somewhat softer sounds of bamboo guitars, torches flared on every side of the camp, and moved silently behind rocks and trees, signal fires

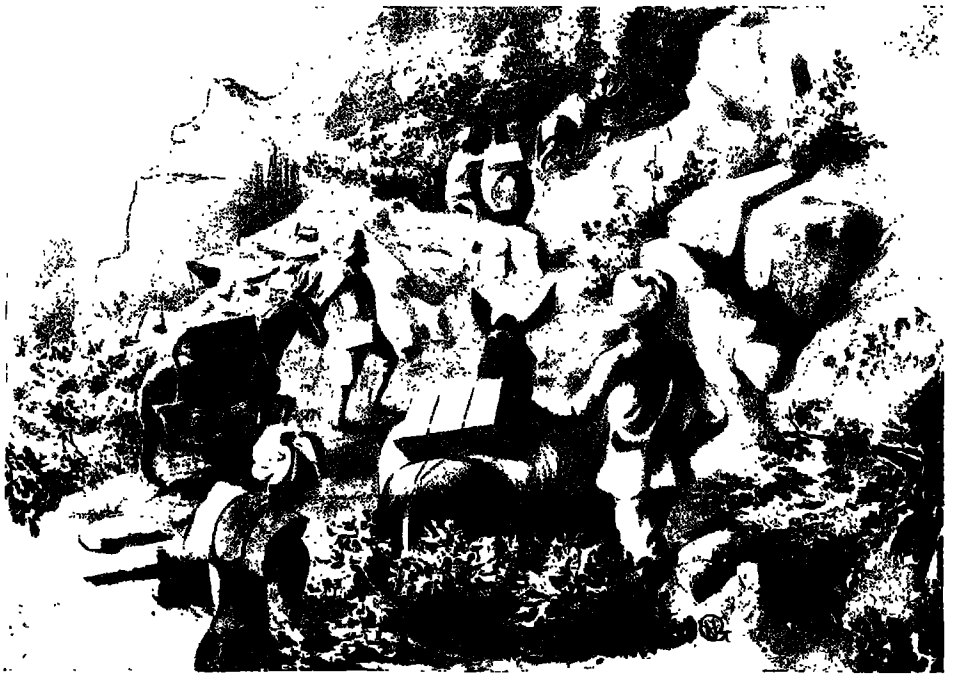
blazed up now and again, far and near, and occasionally could be heard the shrill calls, passing from one band of men to another, across the valleys. It was a night to set one thinking.

Fifty rifles make a very compact little force, especially against ill-armed savages. Fifty Sikhs would beat a thousand Chins under any circumstances, but there were many things besides Sikhs to be considered—some eighty undisciplined and cowardly carriers depended on us. The grass grows thick in those valleys, the paths are narrow; and jungle fires travel fast; precious boxes of ammunition and survey instruments and paraphernalia could not be lost sight of, and we had no idea of the numbers of the enemy or what it all meant.

A steep hill rose before us which we must needs toil up to reach our goal, and above all, as I said before, poisoned arrows make one uneasy in thick bush.

Long before dawn we were ready and only awaiting light, and as soon as we could distinguish the path, we started. The torches had gone, the drums had ceased to beat. Had the Chins changed their minds? No! they had not done that, but they had chosen their fighting ground according to their own crude ideas, and those ideas fortunately exactly suited our wishes; for they waited till we had ascended the steepest part of the hill and reached a small plateau near the ridge; then, as the small rear-guard turned a rocky corner, the air was rent with the most hideous yells; those who have heard a pack of jackals on Indian plains can realise exactly what I mean, for it closely resembled it. It was really most startling as it first broke out, and in a moment the carriers threw their loads and rushed for the advanced guard. In two minutes all the loads were lying anywhere and anyhow, and it took a quarter of an hour to collect them. I then gave orders to bayonet the first man who threw down his load again, and the Sikhs meant to obey orders.

Meantime the Chins kept following us at a respectful distance, and the men of the rear-guard, moving at some



A DANGEROUS CORNER

DRAWING BY LADY HELEN GRAHAM

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eight paces' interval, retired very quietly, the remainder of the column regulating its pace accordingly.

It was a quaint experience this of being followed by a horde of yelling savages. Now and again a Sikh would fire into the bush, which immediately caused the Chins to redouble their shouts. I was beginning to think it was a sort of pantomime, when suddenly all shouting ceased, and it was evident either that the enemy had vanished, or that their rude discipline had really something in it. We had not long to wait, for after a few minutes there was a kind of hissing noise, such as I have often heard when a herd of buffalo dashes through long grass, trampling it under foot like a long roller on a pebbly beach, and the Chins were within fifty yards of us! The high grass swayed and arrows began to descend, but the crack of rifles was now incessant, and the carriers were well in hand; rushing on to within forty yards of us, the mad foe again raised their unearthly yells, and then fled. It was astonishing that they should not have seen the folly of their proceedings, but apparently they hoped that the Sikh (whom they did not know) would prove another Jack Burman, and they had seen on more than one important day in their past history how fleet of foot is the latter. I must own I was thankful my men were Sikhs, as I might have had inferior troops, and only so long as men will stand steady is fighting under such conditions a safe matter; panic or want of discipline might lead to unhappy results.

However, we were not done yet, for after marching some distance, and just as we had made up our minds that our route was clear, the enemy, who had advanced in perfect silence, again came on in a crescent-shaped wave, and only ceased when steady volleys forbad their further progress; this time, however, I placed a few Sikhs of the rear-guard behind a large rock, and the rest of the column made a semblance of a rapid retirement.

The Chins once again advanced, and were met by a well-directed fire at a few yards' range; it was their final attempt that day, and defeated, but certainly not disgraced, they

retired, still keeping up their savage shrieks. We reached our bivouac during the afternoon, after having witnessed a new and strange form of tactics.

A few days later Captain Rainey, with several officers and a hundred men, moved up to punish the Panchaung Yuamas for this attack, and I accompanied the column. Incredible as it may seem, the Chins chose once more the exact spot where they had made their first rush on my rear-guard, to attempt another attack on us. This time, however, it was to be on our advanced guard, which was commanded by Lieutenant (now Lieutenant-Colonel) Tighe, D.S.O., a soldier so keen in action that far more determined foes had hesitated had they known their adversary. It was soon over; a rush of Chins direct on our front, a volley, and Michael Tighe, fleet of foot as he was, could not get within reach of them. On this occasion I got quite close up to, fired at, and killed the son of the Chief of Panchoung, whose silver-handled knife I still possess. A day later I had a long shot at a Chin judged to be eight hundred yards distant, and killed him stone dead, shot through the head. It proved to be the Chief of the Panchaung Yuamas, and with his death followed the submission of the entire valley. Thus, without knowing it, I had killed father and son, and materially assisted the expedition in its work.

Days went by, and the troops toiled incessantly; the marches were long, the valleys deep, the hills precipitous, the labour fatiguing; but there were no watching and anxious eyes to follow our humble doings and bring them to public notice, no correspondent of an illustrated paper to send home stirring pictures of strife. How old is the story; how many men like Rainey have done excellent work, hardly known to the public. It is, perhaps, only natural that it should be so, and it must be so again; it is one of the reasons of our country's greatness that her sons toil and moil and seek no recompense save that which comes from the consciousness of duty well done.

On the 19th of January, after a long march, we moved to a camp on the banks of the Maung stream and bivouacked.



THE CHINS AGAIN ADVANCED
DRAWING BY LADY HELEN GRAHAM

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Just after "last post" the Chins, who had collected in considerable numbers on all sides of the hills which surrounded us, began to roll down rocks, and the results were electric; in a moment the whole camp was astir and making for the stream, so as to escape the boulders which now came in tens and again in single file; the flashes from our Sniders and Martinis, the uproar caused by the bustling in camp and the shouts of the savages above us, all combined to make what would have appeared a very lively scene, save for the darkness of the night. It ceased after a quarter of an hour, but not before we had had two Sepoys and three followers severely, and one Sepoy and ten Transport followers slightly wounded. During the remainder of the night we fired an occasional volley into the hills, which kept us free from further molestation. We were gradually learning that practical experience in such countries is worth a lot of book tactics.

Several small attacks were made later on on our escorts, but by March all combined resistance was at an end, and the work of the expedition had begun to bear good fruit, for nearly every captive British subject in the hands of the Chins had been surrendered, fines had been paid, and raids against Burmese villages ceased. A large tract of totally unknown country had been traversed and mapped in. Law had replaced lawlessness, and yet another small portion of the Empire had learnt that there was no one greater than the white Queen across the seas. It was remarkable how quickly these wild people got to trust the British officers. Once, soon after we entered the hills, an unwilling prisoner was ordered to guide the Column to a village that was "wanted"; nothing would induce the man to lead the way, although a shining bayonet was close behind him; he, however, proved most willing when a British officer walked in front of him, as he said he was then sure no evil spirit would bar his progress.

After proceeding a short time, and when within a mile of the village, he lay down and said he could go no further unless another British officer walked immediately behind

him, as he felt sure the Sepoy who was following him meant to bayonet him. As it was necessary at all costs to advance rapidly and silently, he was humoured, and thus sandwiched between two white men, he walked most jauntily and with perfect confidence.

Of the peculiar customs of the Chinboks one might write an interesting chapter, but for this I have no space here. My work in connection with the Intelligence branch of the Quartermaster-General's department being completed, I left the hills, where I had passed a very pleasant time and gained much experience, and turned across country towards Mandalay *en route* for India. Before leaving the large township of Laungshe, which was then our Base of operations, I ascended the Taung-Du Mountain, some five miles south of the town; it was a very steep climb, but this was well repaid by the fine view obtained from the summit.

To the south stretched well-watered and fertile valleys; looking west the Selin stream could be traced almost from its source in the Chinbok Hills; to the south-west the Yomas of Arracan stood out boldly; and it was with great regret that I bade adieu to the beautiful landscape and once more moved down the precipitous path leading to the workaday plains below.

I had been much cheered a few days previously by a telegram from Colonel (now Major-General Sir Reginald) Pole-Carew, Military Secretary to the Commander-in-Chief in India, informing me that Lord Roberts had appointed me to the Army Staff, and posted me as First-class Station Staff Officer to Delhi.

At last, then, I was to serve on the Staff; not this time in a temporary, but a five-year appointment; it had always been my wish, and I now had reason to rejoice that I had rejoined my regiment three years previously instead of taking a well-paid appointment.

From Mandalay I travelled to Rangoon in the same train with Sir Charles Arbuthnot, who was then Commander-in-Chief of the Madras Army, and was on inspection duty in Burmah. I had not met him since 1879, in the Khyber

Pass, but he remembered me, and was good enough to look over my maps, and showed much interest in my reports.

Delhi was a name very familiar to me, for it was my birth-place; and although I had never, in my conscious days, seen the historic city, I knew a great deal about it, for my father had served during its siege in the Indian Mutiny, and had been present at the storming of the Cashmere Gate, and many were the stories I had heard of those famous days. Delhi is now familiar to everybody, and there is little that any ordinary person could tell that is not already known; but for me it had many charms, which of course could interest me alone. Amongst others, was the fact that close by lived an old Jat zemindar (landowner) who possessed considerable property, a portion of which, at least, I must unwittingly have been instrumental in obtaining for him; for in 1857 he had, at considerable risk to himself, at a time when loyalty to the English was a dangerous game, shielded my family from the mutinous Sepoys who were scouring the land; and it had been through his assistance that my mother and I (then a few months old) had managed to escape from their fury. As soon as he heard that I was quartered at Delhi the old man called on me, and throwing aside all his Hindu religious scruples, called on the Christian's God to protect me, placed his hands on my head, blessing me and calling me his son. He brought me several presents, and introduced me to some of his relations and friends. It was altogether a very interesting meeting, and he told me many stories of my two-month-old self.

The life at Delhi was the most pleasant I ever passed in India; the intrinsic and historic interest of the place itself was enough to make it one of the most desirable of stations; sport was plentiful—shooting, pig-sticking, and fishing being all within an easy drive any day of the week; and nearly everyone who visited India was sure to take Delhi on his way, and thus we frequently met friends or acquaintances straight from home.

Lord Roberts, when Commander-in-Chief in India, frequently visited Delhi, the scene of many of his early

exploits; and twice during the time I was there as Station Staff Officer he passed through it. In addition to my military duties I was also Cantonment Magistrate, and as such, under the orders of the Colonel-on-the-Staff in command, was responsible for the roads and military monuments in cantonment limits. Amongst these was the road over the Ridge, which had been allowed to get into bad order, and was destitute of trees. Lord Roberts took the greatest interest in all that part of the station, and by his orders a substantial sum of money was placed at my disposal for planting new trees, and when I left this historic portion of Delhi wore quite a smart appearance.[1] The surroundings of the monument on the Ridge were at the same time neatly levelled and railed in.

[1] Since writing the above I have been at Delhi during the great Durbar, and found the trees were growing, although, owing to the stony nature of the soil, their progress is slow.

CHAPTER IX

1891

THE MUNIPORE DISASTER — PUNITIVE EXPEDITION — LIEUTENANT GRANT, V.C. — CAPTURE OF MUNIPORE — EXECUTION OF RING-LEADERS

THE experience of Agra was to be repeated in Delhi, for shortly after we had managed to secure a good house in cantonments, which I had long set my eyes on, once more came the now familiar orders to start yet again on Field service. The news of the defeat of our troops in Munipore, and the reported massacre (which afterwards turned out to be only too true) of the Chief Commissioner of Assam and his Staff, civil and military, had reached the Government of India, and one of the first names noted for employment in the Military Offices at Simla was my own.

Before even I heard a rumour of any trouble, I received a telegram merely directing me to proceed to Golaghat, in Assam, for active service in Munipore.

I puzzled for a long time what the expedition could be on which I was now ordered, nor did I even dream that what had occurred was really possible. However, the following evening I was speeding by train to Calcutta on my way to Munipore.

The well-known places were passed in turn, and on arrival at Golaghat, I found no longer the quiet little spot of five years ago, but a miniature camp, full of the bustle of impending military life. For although the troops had not yet arrived, detachments of Assam Gurkhas were already on the spot. Every mule, pony, and elephant that could be requisitioned had been called in, ambulance bearers and hospital staff, officers and civilians, buyers and sellers of every kind of commodity, were fast assembling to aid in the retribution that was about to fall on the doomed State of Munipore.

The supreme command of the expedition was in the hands

of Major-General (afterwards Sir Henry) Collett, K.C.B., and I was attached to his Staff as Chief Transport Officer.

The advance was to be made from three different points, viz.—No. 1 Column, under General Collett himself, from the north through Assam, *viâ* Kohima and the Naga Hills; the same route on which my work lay during the Burmah War of 1886–7. No. 2 Column was to advance from the west, *viâ* Cachar, under command of Colonel Rennick, Indian Staff Corps, and the third Column was to move from the south or Burmah Frontiers, under Brigadier-General Graham, C.B. All three Columns were to unite at Imphal (the Capital of the State) and release the British officers, if still prisoners, or should these be dead to avenge their murder and restore order.

To tell of the hardships endured by all ranks would only be to repeat on a large scale, but comparatively speaking in a minor degree, the story of the Kubo Valley Field Force in 1886–7, already described by me in a previous chapter; nor will I weary the reader by recounting the unavoidable delays caused by want of carriers, who formed almost our entire Transport beyond Kohima in the Naga Hills. It is enough to state that now, as in 1886, the season of the year was the most unfavourable for military operations. The annual monsoon rains had set in, the mountain paths were as bad as they could be, bridges and embankments had disappeared, or been destroyed by the Munipuris or their Naga subjects; sickness and disease followed in the wake of other disabilities, and from the Major-General down to the last recruit, all ranks fared badly.

The disaster of Munipore caused much anxiety at the time of the murder of our officers. Nothing resembling it in scale had occurred in India since the days of the Mutiny of 1857, and there were many who prophesied greater troubles; but in truth it was purely a very local outbreak. Munipore was then hardly known by name to most people, and of those who had heard of it, the greater number connected it with polo and polo ponies. Briefly the origin of the attack on

the British Residency and the subsequent retirement of our troops was as follows. Owing to gross mismanagement and tyranny in the State, the Government of India decided to deport the Jubraj—the second person of importance in the reigning family—and for this purpose Mr. Quinton, I.C.S., Chief Commissioner of Assam, with a large escort of Gurkhas, marched from Kohima, in the Naga Hills, and arrived at Munipore on the 22nd March.

Accompanying the Chief Commissioner were several officers, civil and military, but so little was it even imagined that the Munipuris would offer any serious resistance, that no Mountain Guns were taken, although it was known that the Maharaja possessed a battery of 7-pounders, which had been presented to the State by our own Government, besides thirteen other British manufactured bronze or iron guns, and a 4½-inch mortar. The methods to be adopted for securing the person of the Jubraj, is a point that was much discussed at the time; but the Munipore Durbar argued that we meant to use the weapons of deceit and treachery against them.

How, when the Jubraj refused to surrender, we used force and were repulsed, is now an old story, and one of which we have no cause to be proud; yet amongst the officers who retired from Munipore were some who would gladly have stayed, and preferred death to retirement before so poor a foe. It was, in fact, a case of gross mismanagement by those who, in virtue of their seniority, suddenly found themselves in command; and Colonel Skene, who might have saved the situation, was early on that fatal day treacherously made prisoner, detained in the palace, and subsequently murdered by his cowardly captors. Mr. Quinton, and the other officers who had accompanied him and Colonel Skene to the Maharaja's palace, shared the same fate. The guns, presented by the British Government to the Durbar in recognition of former services, rained shot and shell on the unprotected British Residency; chaos took the place of military discipline, and in the darkness timid men were seized with panic, and brave ones could do little or nothing

to restore order. Dawn on the 25th March saw the Union Jack lowered, the Residency abandoned, a mass of ruins, and all semblance of British power vanished.

Amongst the now shattered remnants of the retreating troops was a lady whose name was then on every tongue; Mrs. Ethel Grimwood, the wife of the Political Agent, knew the country and its people from a long residence with her husband at Imphal. She has told her story in an interesting book, *My Three Years in Munipore*, which is well worth reading. The world is ever ready to rush to extremes; first she was made a heroine, then some would cavil at her; but to all fair-minded people there can be but one opinion, and that is that she bore herself as a brave Englishwoman. I do not know her, but I do know very well what she had to endure, and knowing that, I am glad to bear my humble testimony to her patient endurance under terrible trials. A Gurkha soldier who marched with her during that rapid retreat said to me long afterwards, "Now I understand why you Englishmen respect ladies so much."

Yet even in this gloomy story there stands out one grand figure, a man who showed that dogged determination and British pluck which is never absent from any story of our country's wars, big or small. Those who only read official despatches can have little idea of the difficult position in which Lieutenant (soon after Major and V.C.) Grant, of the Indian Staff Corps, was placed. He knew nothing of the Munipuris, and he cared less; all he had heard was the report that several Europeans were prisoners in the hands of the Durbar and confined in a strong Fort, and that our troops had been defeated and had retired from the valley; but it was enough for a man of his stamp. On the 28th March, with only eighty men, many of them recruits, and a most inadequate reserve of ammunition, he left Tummoo, on the Munipore-Burmah Frontiers, where he happened to be quartered, pushed his way over the mountains, the difficulties of which are now well known, in the face of much opposition, and arrived at Thobal on the 31st March.

There he remained fighting against immense odds till the

9th April, when he received peremptory orders to retire on Tummoo, preparatory to the final advance of the Burmah column of the punitive expeditions, then in course of formation, for a simultaneous advance on Munipore.

The story of the defence of Thobal as related by Lieutenant Grant in his despatch should be placed in the hands of every boy; it is a story that, even after all the great recent events of the Boer War, will live in English history; for it is the unvarnished, straightforward, and modest relation of a gallant deed of arms performed by a brave officer and his equally brave native soldiers. Eighty men against an entire country, albeit a small one; what splendid odds! and the circumstances in which it was performed double its interest. He knew then more or less what had taken place at Imphal; he saw little hope of immediate succour from any quarter; but duty was his watchword, and he has made his own name and that of "Thobal" famous. Lord Roberts, then Commander-in-Chief in India, said in his covering Despatch to the Government of India on Lieutenant Grant's report, that in his opinion it "may be published as an example of what it is possible for one British officer with a handful of devoted native soldiers to accomplish by prompt initiative, resolute courage, and soldierlike skill."

But I must return to my own small part in the drama, and tell very shortly how retribution swift and sure fell on the Royal House of Sur Chandra Singh. Major-General Collett's Column consisted of three guns of No. 8 Mountain Battery, and 1,200 bayonets, from the 13th Bengal Infantry, 42nd, 43rd, and 44th Gurkhas and the Naga Hills Battalion Military Police; Colonel Rennick had under his command part of No. 8 Mountain Battery and 1,800 Infantry, including for the first time in the history of India a detachment of the trained Volunteer Force, viz. 50 rifles of the Pioneer Company Calcutta Volunteers. In the Tummoo Column under Brigadier-General Graham's orders were four guns of No. 2 British Mountain Battery Royal Artillery, headquarters and wing of the 4th Battalion King's Royal Rifles, the 2nd

Battalion 4th Gurkhas, and 12th Burmah Battalion. In addition to the above troops there were in reserve a battalion at Tummoo, and that fine corps the 36th Sikhs at Golaghat. One quarter of this imposing force could have settled Munipore and all its army without any difficulty; but after the events that had just taken place there, it was considered necessary to make a display of force commensurate with our position as the ruling power.

The troops quickly pushed through the Namba Forest, and on the 19th of April were ready to start from Kohima. Our carriers consisted chiefly of Nagas from many tribes, and a splendid lot of men these are; sparsely clad, easily fed (for they will eat anything, dead or alive), and hardy as mules, these human beasts of burden are probably unsurpassed for such work in the world. I have seen a Naga woman take a 160-lb. load on her back, suspended from the shoulders and supported by a band across the forehead, and start off on a trudge of thirty-six miles up steep hills as if it were a mere nothing. At times they will carry a child in addition to their ordinary load of eighty pounds weight.

There were some 2,500 Nagas, as the force carried its own rations for many days' consumption; and in addition I had as many mules and ponies as could be found fit to march in such weather and over such trying mountain paths. The assistance given by Mr. A. W. Davis, Indian Civil Service, Deputy Commissioner of the Naga Hills, received the approval of the Viceroy; this officer fortunately had great experience of the country and its people, and had it not been for him the Column could not possibly have started when it did. It was a very difficult job getting such large numbers of carriers, of whose language I knew very little, into gangs with head-men and Non-commissioned officers; but this was all soon satisfactorily arranged, and on the 20th April the force left Kohima. The march was of necessity in Indian file, and whilst waiting to see the rear-guard start, and thus be sure all my Transport had actually left, I watched the long string of men and animals winding along the narrow track across the valleys and under the frowning

heights of Mount Pori Bajry, commonly known as Polly Badjley. I thought of other lands in which I had seen more or less the same kind of thing; recalled the experiences of many a long day's trudge over Afghan hills, Soudan deserts, or Burmese plains, and could at least feel that in a small way I too had taken part in some of my country's empire work. It is especially at such moments that one feels proud of belonging to the noble service, which despite the gibes of foreign critics, can claim an unbeaten record for valour combined with humanity.

Seven days' marching through mire, jungle, and mosquitoes, with little or no opposition from a now terrified enemy, brought us to Sengmai, only eleven miles from Munipore, and there the Major-General tried to get into heliographic communication with the Tummoo and Silchar columns; this, however, was found impossible owing to the thick weather. It had been previously arranged that the three columns should converge on the city on the same day, viz. the 27th April, and we all prayed that the Maharaja and his noble army might yet give us the chance of a fight of some sort.

After a hurried meal that night I accompanied Lieutenant Eales of the Buffs, our chief signalling officer, to the highest peak within reach of camp, in the hopes of getting lamp communication with General Graham.

From the summit we could see through the darkness the destruction being wrought in the once sacred palace and within the extensive Fort walls; great flames shot up into the air, thick black smoke rose over parts of the city, and what its Chiefs would not defend with their lives they were determined to destroy by the elements. Munipore as I had known it once I was never again to see; the Residency had long since been razed to the ground; the pleasant walks and avenues where I had passed many cheery days years before, had been disfigured beyond recognition, and now under my eyes some of the very dwellings of the former haughty rulers were being added to the roll of destruction. It was, however, no time for contemplation; long marches and the

work of a Transport officer demand rest, and I was in bed by midnight. Next day all the Columns reached Imphal, where we found the relics of our murdered officers, and saw with our own eyes how brutal at times can be the Eastern when roused to fury and released from the bonds of European supervision.

General Graham's column had had a smart fight with the enemy six miles north of Pullel, and given them a severe handling; the Munipuris had been regularly caught in a trap, and consequently had fought desperately; seventy-six of their dead were counted behind their intrenchments and fifty-two outside, whilst many others were killed by the mounted infantry. Amongst the killed was a Prince, and another officer who had actually taken part in the murder of Mr. Quinton and his companions.

In this fight four British officers were severely wounded, including the gallant Grant, V.C., whilst leading his men to the attack. I met him shortly after he had received his wound, and was struck by his simple manners; he said little of his own deeds, but was loud in praise of his Gurkhas and Punjabis. The burial service for our murdered officers was a most impressive sight, and one not likely to be forgotten by those present; the old graves in the Residency garden had been desecrated, but a new site was chosen, and there, I am told, now stands a monument erected by Government to the memory of those who paid their debt to the Empire with their lives.

Towards evening I wandered into the outlying palace buildings, and came across the photographic studio of the late Maharaja, where I picked up some good developed plates, which proved most interesting.

In one room were a number of fine cameras and lenses, but I was just too late, as a British soldier had kicked most of them to pieces before I arrived. I also found a silver trumpet, probably used for sounding royal salutes. Late that night a merchant I had known in old days came to my hut and informed me that he could point out where all the Maharaja's jewels were hidden! At dawn next day accord-



THE BRITISH CANTONMENT AT MUNIPORE

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ingly I accompanied him with six followers carrying picks and shovels, etc. Arrived at an old tree in the *Pat* or enclosure, he told me to dig under a small domed roof, which I proceeded to do. After half an hour's hard work we came to a very solid mass of masonry, which was with much difficulty broken through, and below this again was a kind of cellar of bricks cemented together. Visions of untold wealth rose before me! castles floated in the air! I could already see in fancy's fields my box on the moors, and I almost began to wonder how I should ever get away with the diamonds of Golconda and the rubies from Burmah's mines, which must surely now be within my grasp. Facts are frequently most unsavoury morsels, and the fact in this case was that, cement and masonry notwithstanding, there was nothing under all this elaborate building. After several hours of useless labour, I went away a sadder and a wiser man! I was told later by some of the palace hangers-on that many years before a god had been buried under the dome; but no one could tell when or why it had been removed.

Amongst other things brought to me as presents were an ivory carved stick, which I afterwards presented to the late Lord William Beresford, and a gold medal given by the Indian Government to the Bulram General; this latter I foolishly gave back. I say foolishly, as a few days afterwards the owner came to me in a great state of excitement, and stated it had been taken away by a soldier. A library outside the town was set on fire, and though I did all I could to save it, I was unsuccessful; possibly many valuable Eastern books were destroyed.

Once Munipore was in our hands, the troops had rest; but, as usual, the work of the Transport had only then begun in earnest. One of my assistants was Lieutenant Rice, of the Royal Irish Fusiliers, and now Captain in the Indian Staff Corps; in South Africa he was severely wounded and taken prisoner by the Boers after the fight at Nicolson's Nek.

The ruling family had all fled the day before our arrival

at Imphal, but were promptly followed by small detached Columns; captured, tried by special commission, and sentenced. The arch-villain Tongal General was hanged, as was the Jubraj; the others were deported or otherwise punished, and a boy selected by Government was nominated to succeed to the gaddi (throne).

Thus ended another chapter in the history of India, and I wonder if in our day yet another will be added in which the new ruler will play as conspicuous a part as did his predecessor. I had the satisfaction of a mention in despatches at the close of this my sixth tour of active service in the Field.

CHAPTER X

1892–1897

ALDERSHOT—KAMPTEE—DELHI TIGER ADVENTURE—INVALIDED HOME—ACQUI—POONA—DEESA—MHOW—ASIRGHUR—THE STATE OF DHAR—NAGPORE—APPOINTED A.A.G.—TOCHI FIELD FORCE

IN 1892, I obtained leave to Europe, and spent part of the time travelling on the Continent; the glories of Chamounix and the Alps and the grand mountain climbing quickly rid me of the malarious effects of Munipore and Burmah; and being anxious to see something of home soldiering, I volunteered to attend the manœuvres at Aldershot, then commanded by Sir Evelyn Wood. My request was granted, and I joined the Staff of Major-General Gregorie, C.B. Mimic warfare in England I soon found was not the pleasant outing it is frequently painted, at least, as far as personal discomfort is concerned it appeared to me to be anything but pleasant. Of course, it must be remembered that I was a stranger on the Staff, my uniform and horses were hurriedly got together, my servant was raw to the work, and everyone seemed to think I must know all about Aldershot. However, all these drawbacks were overcome, and I found myself one of the Brigade Staff. How I wished the first night that one of my Indian syces had been present, men who would have smiled at such small petty annoyances as I was subjected to. About eleven o'clock a storm burst over Great Frensham Pond, where we were camped; my bell tent, which I had been obliged to pitch almost alone, was nearly blown down; my two horses both dragged their pegs and bolted, and I was left disconsolate, for I could not even find a match wherewith to light a cigar. Voices all round showed that others were, if not as bad, at least in some discomfort, and I own I felt almost glad at the thought.

Truth to tell, for a poor man at home, in those days at any rate, to serve on the Staff during manœuvres was about as

uncomfortable a job as could be imagined. A *carte blanche* order on White would, of course, have procured everything and saved all trouble, but then the bill must have been paid, and I soon discovered that with one untrained soldier-servant and horses on hire, English manœuvres in bad weather entirely eclipsed in discomfort anything of that sort in India. The General and his Staff were considerate in everything, but I had done all my service with troops and followers inured to campaigning, and the difference when it came to serving with others was a remarkable disclosure to me. Soon after I joined, late one evening the General ordered me to ride a considerable distance by country lanes, on a certain duty, and to return by a fixed hour. To most officers acquainted with Aldershot it would have been a simple enough task; but I knew nothing of the country then (I know every yard of it now), and roads have a bad habit of going in all and every direction. Before starting, therefore, I went to a senior officer I knew, and asked him if he could give me a hint as to the best way of getting to C——. He looked astonished, said, "Surely you on the Staff should know that; it only shows why we get into messes." I explained that I had never been in Aldershot before, and had only just then arrived; nevertheless, my friend shrugged his shoulders and began a lecture on how to ride by the stars, etc. I told him I had no time nor inclination just then to begin a study of astronomy, a science I had unfortunately neglected in my youth, but I could not help saying that if we ever met in other lands in the tented field I had no doubt he might possibly be glad of a hint himself. He has since lost his own way on the African veldt: I wonder if he would still remember a humble Captain of Frensham Pond days?

The manœuvres ended, I returned to Switzerland. I had at least learnt that one can have a fill of discomfort even when in the immediate vicinity of the headquarters of the First Army Corps, and I was glad I had the chance of seeing something in a small way of Staff work in England. During this visit to Switzerland I was a witness of the terrible destruction that overtook the village of St. Gervais near Chamounix,

when a newly-formed lake burst its temporary dam and carried away houses and everything else in its headlong course.

I returned to India at the end of 1892, and having a few weeks' leave still due I went on a visit to my brother, who was then chaplain at Kamptee, in the Central Provinces. A genuine parson and a keen sportsman, he had lived his life amongst British soldiers in India. Rowing in his College eight, and playing for his eleven at Oxford, had not prevented him from taking Honours in the School of History; and, once in India, he had wasted no time in acquiring a thorough knowledge of Oriental languages.

In Persian he had passed the Honours examination test, and had a special gold medal from Government; in Arabic, Urdu, and Hindi he had gained the High Proficiency standards, and when leave could be had from his chaplain's duties it was always devoted to hunting the tiger, bison, or other noble beast. After twenty years spent in the Government service, and seeing but little prospect of applying his knowledge of languages, he has now retired, and devotes his time most usefully to constructing railways in the heart of the forests he knew so well in past years. As he was unable to accompany me on a short shooting trip, I started by myself for the country across the River Wein Gunga. The annual rains had taken a new lease of life; every little stream became an obstacle, and although after six days' heavy marching I eventually reached my destination, and actually forced my way into the overgrown jungles, I found it quite impossible to do any tracking, and was obliged to return to Kamptee. Fifteen days of incessant wetting, with seldom a change of dry clothing, brought on a very severe attack of rheumatism, which, six months later, obliged me to resign my Staff appointment and return to Europe.

Meantime, however, I managed to shake off the evil effects and rejoined my Staff appointment at Delhi. The Indian hot weather is not exactly the time during which those who can get away submit to sit on an office stool, and much as I recognise the necessity for performing this feat, I have

always made it a rule to get some privilege leave (as it is called in India) annually, and to spend it shooting; many, however, prefer even an office stool to the trials inseparable from big game shooting in the scorching plains of Central India or the Central Provinces, during the months of May and June. It is, indeed, not a matter to be undertaken lightly; hot winds, choking dust, a small eighty-pound tent, and many a blank day have all to be considered; but given the man who can face them, there is the other side of the picture also; the sun gone down, a tent under a grand old forest tree, cool beer or soda-water swinging lazily suspended in a basket by a rope from an overhanging bough, the savoury odour from the chef's improvised kitchen, the feeling of labour over, and the approach of refreshing sleep ahead. But these are only the minor and less pleasing items; look across the path under yon mango tree not fifty yards away; six or seven men are sitting, all chattering, all apparently busy, their heads bent low, as if playing some interesting round game; yes! it is all that, and the material for it has been your handiwork. Knives are twittering as they are rubbed quickly across stones to give them an edge; a strong smell of tobacco rises every now and again, for the old forest campaigner, the shikaree Sita Ram, is enjoying a well-earned smoke, whilst he tells the younger men the how and the wherefore of their task; and as you walk across from your tent, just emerged from your tub, and clad in the lightest of costumes, there lies in all his grandeur Mr. Stripes, now fast being shorn of the tawny skin that will lie in your hall and often recall a grand day's sport—a memory that lives longer than most others. And maybe fortune has been with you this day, and having watched with satisfaction the process of preparing Stripes for Rowland Ward, you cast your eyes upwards, and there, drying in the breeze, hangs a head that but twelve hours previously had crashed through the jungle, borne on the shoulders of some mighty old bull bison or lordly sambhar. These are trophies worth going through fire and water to obtain; then the heat, the worries and disappointments are all forgotten, and you

cannot but feel sorry for young A——, who, not caring to face them, has betaken himself to Simla, Darjeeling, or other local Elysium where tigers roam not, and the perambulator is a warning against the loss of freedom. Many a Subaltern have I known who had better have spent his last shilling on a double-barrelled ·500 Express rifle than have had to meet expensive Himalayan hotel bills, and after that still more expensive bills of other kinds.

At Delhi I again had very good shooting, and frequently added a black buck or graceful chinkara head to my collection. In May, I managed to get two months' leave, and again joined my parson brother in Kamptee, and we started on a shooting trip in the Central Provinces.

Little did I dream how soon my shooting and service in India was to end; but it is as well we cannot foresee these things. Our seventh day out was destined to be one of the most enjoyable and exciting of all my shikar adventures. It was four a.m. when we started for a favourite bison pool of his. Only the previous day he had seen and fired at a tiger in the valley between our camp and the pool. He had chanced to come on this tiger in broad daylight, and we certainly never expected we should see him again under similar circumstances; but in big game shooting luck is a most important factor, and this was to be one of our lucky days. Moving slowly and cautiously up the ravine, where grew in luxuriousness the green and cool-looking jaman bush, whilst above bigger trees cast their shadows over the shiny sands and heated rocks, we came on a veritable tiger's paradise—just a slight hollow in the sand showing unmistakable signs of having been very recently occupied by Stripes; within a foot of his bed was a small crystal pool of water, and all round was thick shade. We stopped and closely examined the spot, and made up our minds we could not be far off our quarry; slowly on again, and we had hardly gone ten yards when I felt a touch on my shoulder, and the shikaree pointed to our front.

I peered into the low grass and brushwood, and there, at fifty yards from us, stood a tiger broadside on with his head

turned our way, and staring intently. In a moment we had both fired, and not a sound but the echoes could be heard; quickly reloading our double ·577 rifles, we were both closing the breech when, like a fire engine, out dashed the tiger right on to our muzzles; he had only been wounded, and, full of rage and fury, meant mischief. But two armed men who will stand calmly under such circumstances are generally more than a match for any wild beast. In this case the tiger was practically on the top of us before either could fire or even bring rifle to shoulder; the poor maddened beast had only to make one more spring, and one or other of us would have been dashed to the ground and badly mauled. As a matter of fact, the muzzle of my rifle was almost touching his head, and I was on the point of pulling the trigger, when with a savage growl the tiger stopped dead and instantaneously leaped down into the nullah to our right. My brother turned sharp in the same direction to get in a shot, and I have no recollection of what exactly was my own intention, when I heard a rushing sound, and the grass on my left suddenly parted, bringing me face to face with a second tiger, who stopped dead at five yards and greeted me with a roar.

It takes time to describe; it took but little to enact the whole scene. In the confusion and medley, I thought for a moment it must be the same wounded tiger which had so mysteriously disappeared, but there was not much time for thinking, and so I fired, and fortunately killed him where he stood. Without a groan number two rolled over on his side, and my brother and I mutually turned to exchange congratulations.

What had become of our original antagonist? This was the first question to be decided, and we set about doing it. Our old shikaree was not out with us this day, and his substitute had early come to the conclusion that a tree is a safer place than mother earth for watching such proceedings as ours; he and another gun-carrier had accordingly placed themselves in safety some ten feet up a big tree, and were now calling out and pointing to a path fifty yards up



FACE TO FACE WITH A SECOND TIGER

DRAWING BY LADY HELEN GRAHAM

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the hillside. After scanning the spot with my glasses in vain, we determined to walk up the beast. This is always a dangerous business with a wounded tiger; but assured from his behaviour that he was badly hit, and being anxious to make sure of him, we walked in his direction shoulder to shoulder. With my brother I think I could face anything; he imbues you with the idea of strength. Five minutes' search brought us right on to Stripes, who was lying behind a large rock dead. One bullet had passed through the liver and out on the other side of the body. Thus ended as exciting a half-hour as I had ever known, and one I always recall with pleasure.

Two days later I was prostrated with rheumatism, which I had never been able to shake off since my October shooting trip, and so bad was this attack that I was obliged to give up shooting and return to Delhi and take leave. This was a bitter blow, as I had only just rejoined from home, and had no desire to return, nor, indeed, the wherewithal to do it.

Staff appointment gone; racked with pain; confined to bed; in those days everything seemed dark, but the silver lining of hope was still there, and I feel I am only performing a duty in relating how I was almost marvellously restored to health. Through the great kindness of Sir Alfred Fripp, C.B., C.V.O., who has since done such excellent work with the Imperial Yeomanry Hospitals in South Africa, I received every attention in London, and all that skill could do was done. By chance I was one day told of a place called Acqui, in Piedmont, Italy, and within a week I was installed in the "Terme," as the Mud Bath Establishment is called. I will not go into the details; I was only there twelve days; I arrived an absolute cripple and unable to walk upstairs to my bedroom without assistance; in three days I could easily manage this; in a week I had lost all pain, and the day I left I was as well as I have ever been in my life; the cure was not only rapid but permanent, for I have never again had a return, although for three years I have since lived in the Hinterlands of West Africa, under every form of

discomfort, surrounded by my fellow-countrymen stricken with fever, ague, and other ailments.

I attribute it to Acqui and the wonderful properties possessed by its glutinous black mud and waters. I have since advised many friends to try these baths, and those who have followed my advice have acknowledged the great benefits that they have derived.

Whilst staying at Acqui I met the great statesman, the late Signor Crispi, who informed me that he considered them the best baths in Europe for rheumatic cases. The Italian Government maintains barracks for soldiers suffering from rheumatism and sciatica, and the people are firm believers in the efficacy of the cure. From Acqui I visited the battlefield of Marengo, only a short distance by train.

Acqui enabled me to return once more to the land of my adoption fit and strong, and having lost my Staff appointment, I rejoined my regiment at Poona, in the Bombay Presidency. I had been absent from regimental duty for five years, but I had meantime got my Majority in the ordinary course of promotion, and so at least enjoyed the privilege of being a mounted officer.

Regimental soldiering, however, was not to be my lot, for within a fortnight of joining I was offered the acting appointment of Assistant Adjutant-General on the Staff at Deesa by Sir Charles Nairne, then in command of the Bombay Army. My feelings can be better imagined than described, for this was really a big jump; heretofore I had only held small Staff billets, but now was placed as high as I could go in my rank; and it was made doubly agreeable by Sir Charles himself telling me that he had watched my career and was glad to give me the appointment, because he believed I was well fitted for it. After that he twice wrote to me, giving me advice, which I valued highly as coming from one so true and genuine, as all who ever had the honour of his acquaintance knew him to be.

Deesa is one of the queerest spots in India; a small Military Cantonment dumped down in a howling desert! It is within a few miles of the small and pleasant hill station

of Mount Abu, and is the terminus of a narrow-gauge branch railway from Palampore. Deesa is Deesa and that is all. There is nothing you could possibly get hold of to describe, everything is the same; the barracks are almost the only buildings; the club is merely a bit of one barrack; the drill-grounds are the local parks, and one endless road (endless for it is circular and runs round the station) is the Rotten Row of the quaint little old-world place. However, there are many compensations; the tiger and the sambhar roam within easy reach, and a long day's camel ride brings you to some of the best sand-grouse shooting I have ever seen in India.

The district was then commanded by Brigadier-General Malcolm Nicolson, C.B., A.D.C., and a finer type of Indian Frontier soldier you could not find. Of splendid build, with a face once seen never forgotten, he at once impressed you as being a man absolutely without fear of anything. He had spent his soldiering days amongst the wild tribesmen beyond Scinde; he knew their language and customs, and had imbibed their spirit. But for his colour and Saxon tongue you might easily have mistaken him for a Pathan, when he made up his mind to turn out as one of that fine race. Possessing many peculiar ideas, and caring not a jot who did or did not agree with them, Brigadier-General Nicolson was at once a man you would follow anywhere, and a friend who went about seeking whom he might help in trouble. Many a Subaltern both in the British Service and in the Indian Army could tell a tale that makes one rejoice to think there are such men to be found. The true stories that could be written of his adventures would make the Editor of the *Wide World Magazine* envious; but it is not for me to relate these, and I hope if this should ever be read by my General he will forgive even the little I have said. Knowing him as I do I fear I have already said too much.

Though I was only at Deesa a few months I was almost sorry to leave it for Mhow in Central India, to which place I was transferred as permanent Deputy-Assistant-Adjutant-General on the Staff.

At Deesa I first came in contact with the Bombay Army; the 3rd Light Cavalry was quartered there, and I was thus enabled to compare them with the Cavalry Regiments of Bengal and the Punjab, of which I had seen a great deal, both in the Field and in quarters. The smaller horses on which they were mounted made them perhaps distinguishable; but the Sikh, Rajput, and Jat rode side by side here as elsewhere, and as I often watched the Class squadrons on parade I felt there was not much amiss with such trusty soldiers. I frequently attended their riding school, and had long conversations with the Native officers and men, and it is impossible not to admire the true soldierly spirit which brings such men from their homes to serve the King, and actually to pay for the honour of being allowed to enlist.

Mhow was a good district for a Staff Officer to serve in. There was quartered that splendid regiment the 7th Hussars; and the British Infantry consisted of the 2nd Battalion Durham Light Infantry, the two best polo corps then in India. There was also "I" Battery Horse Artillery, commanded by Colonel Josceline Wodehouse, C.B., C.M.G., of Egyptian fame. This historic battery was the same which had charged through the French Army on the field of Fuentes d'Onor, so graphically described by Napier in his history of the Peninsular War; and it had now as Commander a worthy successor to Norman Ramsay, who had "burst forth sword in hand at the head of his Battery, his horses breathing fire." As Governor of the Frontier Province and on the desert plains of "Toski," Wodehouse had proved his Gyppies to be good men and true when led by soldiers like himself, and now he reigns as Major-General in Command of the Lahore Division of the Army of India.

There was plenty of soldiering to be done and much to be learnt. Field days over unlimited country give scope for initiative, and corps like the 7th Hussars and "I" Battery R.H.A. can move in a manner which inspires one with a sense of absolute confidence in troops. With both officers and men of this Battery I spent some of my pleasantest days in India. As D.A.A.G. of the District part of my work

consisted in keeping up to date all local maps, and I thought I could hardly do better than form reconnaissance classes, consisting of N.C.O.'s and men; in this Colonel Wodehouse was most anxious to help, and many were the days of duty combined with the pleasure of long rides that I passed in the company of these fine horse gunners. I was much honoured when the Sergeant-Major and N.C.O.'s asked me to their annual "Fuentes d'Onor" dinner and I found myself the only guest outside the officers of the Battery.

Two years later, when serving in the North-West Frontier Campaign of 1897, almost on the Afghan borders of Waziristan, I entered a house in an abandoned village, and the sole piece of furniture was a picture, out of an old illustrated English paper, representing "The charge of 'I' Battery, R.H.A., at Fuentes d'Onor." I took it off the mud wall and sent it as a souvenir to the N.C.O.'s Mess, telling them that the name and fame of their battery had reached to the furthest ends of the Empire. It was a curious coincidence.

India can as a rule hold its own in matters of red tape, but I came across a really astonishing case of longevity in this line whilst I was on the Staff here. With the post arrived one morning a document so amusing that I copied it word for word, as a sample of how far a joke can be carried. A contractor in England had sent out to this country a few samples of soldiers' shirts, in the hope that if they proved satisfactory he might secure a large order. How many shirts he had sent I cannot say, but presume from what followed that there must have been only two or three at most.

Be that as it may, one of these samples was started from the fountain head of military tailoring, together with a circular memorandum; it was not addressed to any particular unit, Brigade, Division, or even Army Corps, but beginning with Bengal, it included all British corps, with a column to show date of receipt, date of forwarding on, and a special column for remarks, in which each Commanding

Officer was to enter how many shirts would be required for his corps. This journey in ordinary course would take a very long time, but this was, comparatively speaking, only the early stage of the peregrinations of that letter and garment; for after traversing Bengal these had to pass on to the sister Presidencies, and wind up their long journey somewhere over the deserts of Scinde, or wherever else Her Majesty's soldiers might be quartered in India.

Possibly the clerk who composed this extraordinary document had only a year or two to serve for pension, and thus felt himself secure from ever having to attend to it again; he must have chuckled to himself if this was the case; or maybe it was some collector of autographs, who thought it an excellent manner of obtaining the signatures of the entire Army of India at one fell swoop; be that as it may, the truly entertaining official packet, appropriately tied with red ribbon, was cast on the waters of the postal sea and started on its long journey. What the first or second recipients may have thought of it was not recorded in the column of remarks; but as any ordinary person might have divined, the circular soon got parted from the shirt and arrived at its next destination by itself. The third receiver evidently foresaw the possibilities of a huge joke, for he noted that he had received the circular, but asked, "Where is the shirt?" It would possibly have been considered impertinent for him to ask the question of Headquarters, so he passed it on in due course. One of the next commanding officers noted, "No shirt received and none required," and after this the jest was carried on in earnest. One irate officer had written, "No shirt either required or received"; another, "Where, oh where, is the shirt?" and yet another, "Shirts required but not received"; and so on. There were some uncomplimentary remarks in pencil and even an attempt at a sketch; but still the solitary circular kept on its course, posted from one command to another, and when it reached us it still had months to run. I asked my General if I might send it to the United Service Institution to be placed in the bow and arrow section, but like those before me I signed

and passed it on to afford half an hour's amusement in many an otherwise dull office.

At Mhow I managed to get some very good sambhar shooting in the hilly country to the south, and on one occasion I bagged a 42-inch head. It was at the end of a long day's work, and the very last drive of the day; I was standing under one of the last trees on the hillside, and as the beat approached and nothing came out, I thought it was to be a blank; but suddenly, a hundred yards to my right, I saw what delights the shooter's eye—a grand pair of antlers moving slowly over the low sea of grass. A bullet from my trusty ·500 Holland and Holland laid him low, and the trudge of five miles to camp, over steep paths, seemed nothing as, borne on a coolie's shoulders, my noble sambhar's head led the way.

One of my duties was occasionally to visit and report on the Fortress of Asirghur, situated on the Satpura Range of mountains. This ancient fortress, which stands on an isolated hill some 900 feet above the surrounding country, and is itself 2,300 feet above the sea-level, was formerly used as a sanatorium for the British troops at Mhow. Tourists pass northwards by the Great Indian Peninsular Railway, and some of them may notice the bold outlines of its embattled walls, as they stand out clearly against the blue sky, but few ever honour it with a visit; and yet Asirghur is a place well worth seeing. The chief approach on the south-west is by a steep ascent of stone steps, through five gateways of fine masonry. Legend says that Asirghur was fortified about 1370 by a herdsman named Asa Ahir, to whose ancestors it had belonged for seven centuries. The Emperor added it to his vast possessions, and in turn it was swallowed up with other strong places by the Mahrattas. After the Battle of Assaye, Asirghur was captured by a portion of General Wellesley's army from Daulat Rao Scindiah. Restored to Scindiah it was again finally besieged by us in 1819, and was surrendered after an investment of twenty days.

To enjoy the scenery thoroughly one must needs be alone;

often have I mounted the walls in some secluded spot and looked over the great plains below, dotted with low hills, and here and there oases in the valleys.

At such times one feels almost melancholy to think we live in so prosaic an age, when in place of countless thousands of Mahratta horsemen sweeping over the plains one can watch, in their stead, the white peaceful coils of smoke from distant passing trains as they bear their busy thousands north and south; none concerned with glorious bygone history, all intent on present-day business alone. Asirghur is, like many others in India, a sad spot, a relic of a once great people, and I never passed through its gates without feeling that our race, although it has reason to be proud of its possessions and the deeds by which they were won, has nevertheless sometimes laid a rough hand on many immortal and inimitable structures of a more refined architectural age.

On the occasion of one of my visits to the fort I put in two days' shooting on the banks of the River Taptee, and good fortune favoured me.

The officer commanding had kindly made all arrangements for shikaries, and late in the evening I arrived at my camp. I was greeted with the good news that two tigers had killed a buffalo about half a mile away, so I at once started with a companion. We arrived before dark, and took our seats in the very roughly prepared machans in trees overlooking the kill. It was a moonlight night, and looked as if it meant to remain fine; but we had not been long watching when black angry clouds came sweeping over us, and the distant rumbling of thunder warned us that a tropical storm was approaching; still, the prospect of two tigers turning up at any moment was worth a wetting, and we kept our places. In half an hour the aspect had considerably changed, and great raindrops began to fall, followed by a whirlwind of dust, leaves, and branches, all swept onwards and upwards by the fast-approaching storm; then the thunder came in peals that made one tremble and almost afraid to move; lightning, which had shortly before appeared distant, now lit

up the wild scenery with rapid and startling flashes, and seemed almost as if searching us out in our hiding-places. It at last became impossible to stay any longer, and shouting to my companion, we decided to descend and find our way back to camp if possible.

The descent from a tree under such circumstances is by no means a pleasant task, and with a rifle in one hand not at all an easy one. Whilst scrambling down as best I could I was half blinded by a flash of lightning, which seemed to run along the barrels, and quite unconsciously I dropped the weapon into the slush below. An hour's wading through mud and water brought us to our camp; hardly, however, had we arrived when the storm ceased, and once again the moon appeared. It was very trying work, but I had no intention of losing the chance of still bagging Stripes; so having hastily changed my bedraggled garments and swallowed a cup of hot coffee, I started once more, and by midnight was again seated in the now damp and clammy machan.

Those who have not tried sitting up for tigers can little imagine the poetry of the sport; there was a time when I decried the method of what I then termed slaughter, but it needs nerve and endurance enough to satisfy anyone. I do not contend that a man in a tree, and hence comparatively safe from the actual onslaught of a tiger, must have the nerve of one who walks straight on to a "kill"; but he who will sit all night wakeful, watchful, and ready, worried by mosquitoes and annoyed by every form of insect life, and, withal, fighting against the often overpowering desire for sleep, will generally be equally keen to do the other also. Moreover, even in a tree one is by no means absolutely safe, as generally the machan is made very low, and tigers have over and over again been known, under peculiar circumstances, to scramble up high trees.

In this connection I remember Captain Lamb, of the 40th Regiment, telling me of a case in Assam where he followed a tiger across some fields into a sort of island in the middle of rice swamps, where the trees grew high and there was

much undergrowth. He traversed the entire plot and had it driven in every direction, but was completely puzzled, as he could find no tracks of the beast having left his sanctuary.

Suddenly the tiger was observed almost hidden between two branches of one of the trees, and high above the ground. He had small chance with Lamb, who was one of the finest shots in the Army; but it proves that tigers can and will, on occasion, climb trees. However, to my story.

Immediately below my machan ran a stream, and to my left front was rising ground. The deadly stillness which follows a storm was only broken by the gentle ripple of the water, and the heavy patter of the rain-drops, and now and again the uncanny sound of some wild beast wandering after his restless night. Over three hours I sat listening intently; every rustle at such times magnifies itself into a tiger's tread, every shadow appears to have the stripes which mark the king of Indian beasts, but you soon acquire the habit of distinguishing between the real and the imaginary.

At last comes a sound which makes the blood dance wildly through the veins, as the ripple of the water is suddenly broken by some slow but heavy footstep; I quietly bent over in my machan and looked, and there within twenty yards of me stood a tiger, his forefeet in the water, and his head turned towards his somewhat highly savoured meal. The rifle was in my shoulder and I had almost called my usual blessing on the gun-maker of 98, New Bond Street (whose work I knew of old to be beyond reproach), when my eyes were quickly turned to a still more beautiful creature, another tiger, who nimbly bounded over the brook and stood in all his splendid majesty fully ten yards closer to me. No man can look on such a sight and not admire the wonders of creation; for my part I was quite lost in admiration. Above, the moon shone resplendent and danced on the rippling water, the shadows of a thousand branches seemed to pass in kaleidoscopic quickness over the beautifully striped skins as they stood stone still. It was no time perhaps for the hunter to hesitate or become sentimental, the work



I NOW HAD THREE TO CHOOSE FROM

DRAWING BY LADY HELEN GRAHAM

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is death, and the time very limited, for a sound or move may warn your quarry, and then all is lost; but it is worth even losing a skin (for that is all it amounts to) to see even once such a sight in nature's wilds, and I should not have regretted it had I lost my chance.

This, however, is to be one of my record days' sport, and before I can decide which of my two tigers shall first fall a victim, right under me appears yet a third. I now had three to choose from, but no longer standing still. Something seemed to warn them—a breath of wind, or perhaps a sound, at I turned in my hard seat the better to adjust my rifle; anyhow the biggest of them moved off some twenty yards and the last joined turned up the slope. It was high time I did something, so taking the best aim I could in the uncertain moonlight, I fired. The report of a rifle in dense forest is always startling, and in this case to it was added the angry roar of my victim; that he was hard hit I knew, for he rolled over and seized in his mouth the flimsy ladder of creepers which I had used as a means of ingress. The second tiger meantime also gave tongue, and as he stood on a mound in the now waning light, I fired a second barrel at him, which, however, was ineffectual. The wounded beast was all this time tearing down the creepers within a few feet of me, and I felt his movements distinctly in my machan. I fired two more shots, but could take no aim and missed him. Eventually his groans ceased and with dawn I saw he was dead. Thus ended a very interesting night's work, and although I should have bagged two, with all the opportunities they gave me, I never regretted having waited perhaps a little too long.

From Mhow I received permission to attend the manœuvres at Deesa, under my old chief General Nicolson. Whatever else he may, or may not, have been, he was practical in all he did, and in this instance everyone present was agreed that no more useful Field movements could have been devised, considering the comparatively small sum of money available. The two Commanders of the opposing forces (one to defend, the other to attempt an

advance on the station, and also to endeavour to destroy its railway communications) were given a perfectly free hand; each had his own Transport, carrying all supplies for several days; no halting grounds or fixed supply depôts were of necessity to be considered; Transport was liable to attack and capture as in war time, and in fact it was as near an imitation of the real thing as it was possible to make it. The area which might be covered by the opposing forces was ample for manœuvring, and covered some fifty miles, and the scale of baggage for officers and men was kept to a low limit; the General took his full share of our comforts or discomforts, and every officer was given a free hand to work out his own job. There were no orders and counter-orders incessantly emanating from headquarters, and the faults were always pointed out; but wholesale condemnation found no place in these interesting and thoroughly practical manœuvres.

We were all sorry to leave, and I feel sure everyone must have learnt something. General Nicolson had himself shortly after this been promoted from the command of the Deesa to that of the Mhow district, and in the winter of 1895 I was deputed by him to survey and report on the country round the old State of Dhar, near Mhow, with a view to ascertaining whether the crops would interfere with the extensive winter manœuvres being planned. The general supervision was in the hands of Colonel Wodehouse, of "I" Battery, Horse Artillery, and attached for survey duty was Lieutenant Bremner, 20th Hussars, an excellent officer, who afterwards lost his life in the Matabele Campaign. The work was most enjoyable, but ill-luck was to be my lot, for we had scarcely half-finished our survey, when I received orders transferring me once more, this time from the Mhow to the Nagpore district in the Central Provinces. I did all I could to get the orders cancelled till the big manœuvres, in which I had taken so much interest, should have ended, but it was of no avail, and with a heavy heart I bade farewell to my comrades. The long ride into Mhow was perhaps the most hateful I

ever had to undertake, and whilst it lasted I almost wished I had never been posted to the Staff.

Before leaving Mhow I had the satisfaction of seeing a good Club established, and in working order. On my first arrival there I had been surprised to find that, notwithstanding there was a large garrison, and close by was the Civil Station of Indore, yet no proper meeting-place existed. There was a small bungalow, commonly known as the Assembly Rooms or Club, but a few newspapers, some dingy lamps, and a very inferior Bar were the only outward signs of its existence. When General Nicolson took over command of the district he did not occupy the house generally known as the General's, and this afforded a favourable opportunity of securing it for a Club, as it was centrally situated. For reasons of my own, therefore, I volunteered to take over the honorary secretaryship of the Assembly Rooms, which billet, never much sought after, just then happened to fall vacant. Before long I had called a general meeting and placed before the members my proposals for starting a proper Club, which I pointed out was an absolute necessity in a large station like this, and I endeavoured to show from statistics that the venture would not be an unprofitable one.

Colonel Wodehouse was fortunately entirely in favour of the scheme, and backed me up strongly, as did our P.M.O., and a few others. But in India "dustoor," or custom, dies very hard, and nothing came of the first attempt. I had no intention, however, of letting the matter drop, and shortly after called another meeting; this time with better results. Resolutions were passed, estimates called for, and the Major-General sanctioned the house, till then known as his, being rented for the Club. Three months of very hard work followed, as not only had funds to be provided, but the house had to be very considerably altered, furniture, billiard tables, crockery, glass, and a thousand other things purchased, and at the same time the old Assembly Rooms were being converted into Club chambers. I have seldom done more writing and minute calculating

than during the time this Club was coming into existence, and even then I should never have been able to get through it without the assistance of my wife, who took over a great part of the details and certainly deserved the gratitude of the entire community. When we left Mhow the Club was in thorough working order; and although in the process of time it has naturally been improved and enlarged, I think I may truthfully say that the now well-known "Club of Central India" owes its existence to me.

Kamptee, the headquarters of my new district, was pleasant enough in its way, and our chief, Brigadier-General John Gatacre, C.B., was popular with all who had the pleasure of serving under him, but nothing can compensate a Staff officer for the absence of the material which goes to make up a fighting force.

In the Nagpore district there was only one Battery of Field Artillery, and not a single Cavalry soldier. "Whatsoever thine hand findeth to do, do it with thy might," is a splendid maxim, and hence all one could do was to endeavour to learn everything concerning two Arms of the Service, and to imagine the third.

On Brigadier-General Gatacre vacating the command of the district, it fell to Brigadier-General Westmacott (now Major-General Sir R. Westmacott, K.C.B., commanding the Mhow district). Those who have the honour of his acquaintance know what it means to serve under him. He organised a very instructive Camp of Exercise in the winter of 1896, and I remember a night attack made by one of the opposing forces, which the General and I accompanied. It was a wet night, and the enemy was completely surprised; the outlying picket, consisting of a native officer and some fifteen men, was easily captured without a shot being fired, and it was only when we were within a hundred yards of the camp that a sentry for the first time challenged us. The end of that camp in real business would have resembled the hosts of Sennacherib, and the look of that commanding officer, as he hurriedly came out to ask what it all meant, in his pyjamas and a sword, was fit subject for a Kodak.

In April, 1896, I was once again transferred to Deesa as Assistant Adjutant-General, and this being a step of promotion, I was glad to go.

During the two months I was there only one event of importance took place, and then it was my ill fortune to have to superintend the execution of a British soldier for the murder of a comrade. The formalities attending hanging are always painful enough, but when these have to be carried out before the comrades of the condemned man and in presence of the assembled garrison on parade, it is exceedingly trying work. On this occasion, owing to the difficulty of procuring a hangman till the last moment, all the preliminary preparations had to be arranged by me, and I shall never forget the painful impression left on my mind by having to perform so hateful a task. On the appointed day, the man's own detachment, as well as others from each corps in garrison, were assembled in hollow square; the ground was kept clear by a squadron of Cavalry. The unfortunate criminal was removed from his cart and marched to the foot of the scaffold, where he stood with remarkable fortitude while the sentence of the court-martial was read to him, and then mounting the incline with unfaltering step, he had soon paid the penalty of his crime. It was the first time I had been present at the execution of a British soldier, and I hope it may be the last.

On the 18th of June, 1897, about eleven o'clock at night, I was sitting in the verandah of my house when a telegram was put in my hands, in a yellow envelope. This means in India that it is urgent. I opened it, and nearly jumped out of my chair with delight. It was from the Military Secretary to the Commander-in-Chief at Simla, informing me that I had been selected as Assistant Adjutant-General of the Field Force being formed in the Tochi Valley, on the North-West Frontier of India.

I had no kind of inkling what the Force was being formed for, nor even had I heard that anything had occurred on the frontiers, but it was enough for me to know that I was specially selected to hold the highest appointment my rank

qualified me for, and that this time it was to be on active service. I knew hardly anyone at Simla; I had not the honour of the acquaintance of Sir George White, the Commander-in-Chief, and I was serving in a quiet and remote station in the deserts of Katiawar; and yet at a time of profound peace in India, when any officer in the Army would have resigned everything to go in my place, I was one of the chosen ones. There are times in life when you feel you cannot be sufficiently grateful to those in whose hands your fate rests, and this was one of them. That I was selected was in itself a proof that in the Service it is not always necessary to be personally known to the powers that be, and that even in out-of-the-way places you get your chances if you will but do your duty and wait.

Many were the congratulatory telegrams I received, but none was more welcome than one from Sir Charles Nairne, commanding the Bombay Army, in which he wished me every success; and thus buoyed up with hope and almost beside myself with joy, I started the next day for my seventh campaign. I was still only a Major, and I knew I should have many dealings with men far my seniors in the Service; but I trusted to common sense to pull me through this, and for the rest, had I not the confidence of the Commander-in-Chief himself? Three years later what would I not have given to have had the opportunity of serving, in however humble a capacity, under the defender of Ladysmith. This unfortunately was not to be, but still I had the satisfaction of knowing that it was under his orders I was sent on active service, at a time when the chances of it appeared so remote.

CHAPTER XI

1897-1898

THE TOCHI FIELD FORCE—BUNNOO—DUTTA KHEL—SHERANNI—ORDERED TO NIGERIA—ARRIVAL IN ENGLAND

I LEFT Deesa on the 20th June, 1897, and celebrated the Queen's Jubilee night on the narrow-gauge Rajputana Malwa railway. It was blowing a gale; columns of sand swept across the line and covered the track; several times we had to slow down in face of the dust-storms, whilst every portion of the carriage was literally half an inch deep in sand. It was, however, interesting as showing in what different climes and situations the subjects of the Crown celebrate great days in our history. We arrived several hours late at the station where we were supposed to dine; but even so, notwithstanding that every light had been extinguished by the gale, and the table and crockery were thick with dust, on the semi-khaki tablecloth and under the dim light of an ancient wall lamp stood a cake (we did not inquire whence it came) decorated with the loyal letters "God save the Queen." It was worth going through a lot of discomfort to find in the middle of that wild country the motto which was that day in the hearts of many millions of her subjects.

At Kohat, on the North-West Frontier, I was greeted by a letter from the late Sir Charles Nairne, saying he was very pleased at my appointment, and telling me he would watch my work, as I was the representative of the Bombay Army, and he looked to me to keep up its reputation. His kind letter was a great incentive, and I could afford to smile at the remarks of a senior Punjab Cavalry officer, who told me he thought I was far too young for the billet I had been appointed to.

I reached Bunnoo, the Base of operations, on 27th June,

and having reported myself to the Major-General Commanding, set to work at once.

The 'Tochi Field Force,' as the punitive expedition was named, was formed at a time when profound peace reigned in India.

There was the usual dead lull caused by the fiery summer heat, and the Army was, as it were, having its annual siesta. When, therefore, a sudden call to arms became necessary, the Commander-in-Chief had at his disposal the finest troops in the world to pick and choose from if necessary.

Mobilisation, of course, came into play, and most of those whose good fortune it then was to be first for active service were warned; but for the rest, there was the best mule Transport in the country, and the whole of the Staff and Departments of the Army were available.

There can be little doubt that the Force which assembled at Bunnoo was in quality and equipment second to none that ever crossed the Indian Frontier. This splendid Division could have walked through not only the country of the Darwesh Khel Waziris, which it was intended to overrun, but have severely punished the many other sections of the adjacent tribes, who defiantly interfered with our Lines of Communication throughout the time we were in occupation of the valley, and frequently raided and carried off our Transport animals, or those of friendly traders who were working for the Commissariat Department.

The causes which led to the despatch of the Division were as follows. Mr. Gee, the Political Officer in the Tochi, having certain details to settle with the tribesmen regarding the realisation of a fine and the selection of a site for a Levy post, left Dutta Khel for the Maizar villages on the 10th June, 1897, escorted by twelve Sabres 1st Punjab Cavalry, two guns No. 6 Mountain Battery, two hundred rifles 1st Punjab Infantry, the whole under command of Lieutenant-Colonel Bunny, with five other British officers. The Force was well received, and after the Cavalry had reconnoitred up the Tochi, the Column unfortunately settled down near some large trees to the south of the

village, and quite close to it. The Mahomedan Sepoys were hospitably entertained at a meal by the Maliks, but even then black treachery was lurking behind the mud and stone walls of the village of Dreplari.

> "These devotees of Islam's creed
> Shrink not to violate at need
> The laws they worship, the behest
> Of reverence due to hallowed guest."

Once again the red Eastern story was to be repeated, for suddenly and without warning from every tower and coign of vantage, from every mound and hollow, burst forth an inferno of fire; the British officers were of course first selected for death, and soon one and all of these had been killed or severely wounded; the Native officers and men, Sikhs and Mussulmans, quickly rallied and a duel at a few score yards began. It could have but one ending—a gallant few against overwhelming odds; ammunition ran short, the 7-pounder guns fired away all their shrapnel reversed, the gun mules were shot down, the baggage mules stampeded, the dead and wounded lay thick, whilst the numbers of the enemy increased. It is a famous story, to which I can do but scant justice. With heroic gallantry and devotion those splendid Native soldiers began a retirement, the most difficult of all military operations, especially in face of frontier tribesmen. Again and again they turned to bay whilst they gathered up the wounded, and carried or helped their dead or dying officers; for these they would never leave in the hands of their bloodthirsty enemy. Slowly they topped the ridge dividing them from the Dutta Khel plains below; fiercely they cast their gaze on the dead bodies of their comrades, lying close under the walls of Dreplari, already hallowed by their glorious deaths.

Such British officers as still had strength to stand continued to the very end to do their duty, directing the men and setting the old example, which is a special attribute of their countrymen; racked with wounds, soaked in blood, but true to the last.

For three and a half hours, retiring stubbornly, they kept

off their assailants, and during that time only three miles of ground had been covered; but ninety of the attackers had meantime been killed, and many more wounded. About half-past six in the evening reinforcements began to arrive, and at midnight the shattered little band entered Dutta Khel, which only a few hours previously they had left with light hearts and no thought of battle. The bodies of the soldiers, which were brought in by some friendly Khidder Khels, were, in the words of the despatch, "horribly mutilated, irrespective of religion." The perpetrators of this foul outrage were the tribesmen the column was formed to punish.

The Force was divided into two Brigades, commanded respectively by Brigadier (now Major-General Sir) C. C. Egerton, C.B., D.S.O., A.D.C., Indian Staff Corps, and Brigadier-General (afterwards Major-General and K.C.B.) W. P. Symons, C.B., who was killed at Talana Hill. The supreme command was vested in Major-General (now General and K.C.I.E.) George Corrie-Bird, C.B., then in command of the Punjab Frontier Force. The troops consisted of two battalions of British Infantry—the 2nd Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders and the 3rd Rifle Brigade; three regiments of Punjab Infantry; one regiment of Bengal Infantry, and two regiments of Sikhs. The Cavalry, which of necessity had to be limited in such mountainous country, was represented by three squadrons of the 1st Punjab Cavalry; and there were besides two Batteries of Mountain Artillery, a company of Bengal Sappers and Miners, and a full complement of British and Native Field Hospitals and Departmental Corps.

The scheme of operations laid down that besides holding the Tochi, the Force would "probably operate to the west of Dutta Khel 'to punish' the sections of the Darwesh Khel Waziris concerned in the attack of the 10th June on the Political Officer's Escort." The concentration of troops at the Base of operations, usually a smooth task (for such matters are, of course, arranged to a nicety beforehand), was in this case the most trying part of the operations.

The month was June, when the heat on the Punjab Frontiers is almost unbearable; British troops could only march by night, and the halt by day is merely a rest in name, even under the large tents provided for Europeans.

It was under such conditions that the Highlanders and the Rifle Brigade had to march from Kushalgarh, then the rail-head, to Bunnoo—a distance of 110 miles. Country pony-carts accompanied the troops, and relays of these brought a certain amount of ice daily for hospitals and use in case of emergency; but white men marching through a choking veil of fine dust, raised as they silently tramp along the monotonous, shadeless roads of that frontier, with not a breath of air to relieve the stifling atmosphere, and almost gasping for breath, must of necessity suffer terribly. The feet become sore on the roasting macadam, the sun takes heavy toll, and the brain feels as if on fire; in short, the exhaustion is extreme. It was so in this case. Notwithstanding the liberal supply of carts for ambulance purposes, the march told most seriously on both battalions, and before they had arrived at our advanced Posts in the valley the ranks were considerably thinned. As I watched these splendid corps swing past, I felt a lump in my throat at seeing the fortitude and the determination which British soldiers evince under all and every kind of circumstances; their endurance had been tried to breaking-point; their feet were sore, their faces, though tanned dark brown in many cases, showed an unpleasant tinge of yellow, but their hearts were in the right place, and their hopes were high. How soon, alas! were the latter to be dashed to the ground; and it was this, indeed, that put the finishing stroke to many a good man.

Of the Native regiments and Mountain Batteries all that need be said is that they were more fortunate in that they were better able to stand the fearful heat of June and July, and that they were then, as ever, anxious to perform any duty they might be called on to perform.

Dutta Khel, sixty-four miles from Bunnoo, was our advanced Post, and was strongly garrisoned by the time the

Headquarters Staff arrived there. Eight miles further up the river, near which we were camped, and practically within view, was Sheranni, the chief town or village of this portion of the valley; and three miles further on, immediately over the crest of a long ridge, were the Maizar villages —the scene of the gallant fight of the 10th June. We were, therefore, at last within striking distance of our goal, and hourly expected the order to advance. Was there anything to stop us? Rumour—that curse of a camp—was, of course, busy; one day the Mullah Powinda, leader of the Waziris, on our south, was coming with 7,000 men from Marobi to attack us; next day we were going to be overwhelmed by hordes from the north; but on no side could we find signs of an enemy, and Maizar was still a closed book. Whilst we were making our elaborate preparations, the tribesmen quietly removed their belongings from Sheranni, Maizar, and the numerous villages in the valleys to the west, and having betaken themselves to the hills near the Afghan borders, sat down to watch our proceedings, and wait till we again forgave them. Over a week was spent at Dutta Khel, and at last on the 20th July a Column advanced towards Maizar.

In a fighting sense the Waziri is not in the same street with the Afridi and half a dozen other frontier tribesmen; he prefers biding his time to needlessly exposing himself to shrapnel shell and a hail of bullets; and he at least showed his wisdom now by allowing us quietly to occupy his villages and cut down some of his corn.

However, the world moves too rapidly for such trifling affairs as a Frontier expedition to make any difference, and we had not been long in the Tochi when far greater events on the same frontiers drew away even the small interest we might have otherwise caused. The peace that had reigned but a month previously was suddenly dispelled, and the biggest campaign in India since the Afghan War of 1878–80 had to be undertaken. In this land we live on a kind of St. Pierre, which any day might break out in eruption, and it is but common sense to realise and acknowledge this fact.

From the day that news reached the Government of India of the outbreaks to the north, our expedition died a natural death, as all expected it would do. Columns marched hither and thither, collected arms, cut down crops, blew up towers, and destroyed watercourses. Sudda Khan, the arch-villain of Maizar, surrendered in October. He appeared to be perfectly contented, and even wanted to honour me with a hand-shake! But I at least had the satisfaction of saving myself from this indignity.

It cannot interest anyone to hear of our doings after we settled down at Sheranni—a veritable hotbed of disease. There that historic corps, the Rifle Brigade, paid dearly for its share in the expedition. Death was busy in its ranks; sickness struck down the battalion to such an extent that eventually it was with difficulty it could find its own guards and duties; of excitement there was positively none, and at last it became imperative to move the head-quarters down to the Base. Even when at their last gasp I watched with pride these fine fellows striving to do their duty, officers and men alike. I cannot do better than quote the Major-General's despatch regarding them: "This fine battalion had been the victim of an epidemic of dysentery and enteric fever, and had lost three officers and seventy-five N.C.O.'s and men, besides a very large percentage of officers and men invalided or left behind in the field hospitals. I cannot bear too high testimony to the discipline which cheerfully endured and the pluck which combated the scourge during a long and trying season," etc. Aliph Cheem's lines are appropriate—

> "Good-bye, my friends: although the bullet did not lay you low,
> A thought, a tear upon your graves, at least your comrades owe."

The Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders (the old 93rd), although they suffered equally with the Rifle Brigade at the commencement of the operations, recovered themselves remarkably, and with the approach of the winter months of 1897–8 were once more in excellent trim. Like the rest of the troops, this famous battalion had been obliged to

watch and wait till watching had become weariness and waiting endless. Meantime the long summer months had dragged out; most of our mule Transport had been taken away from the Column for operations in Tirah or further north, and the unfortunate Tochi Field Force, shorn of its mobility and reduced to impotence, was left to its own devices. But if a Staff officer in the position of Assistant-Adjutant-General cannot make fighting, he can at least learn much, daily and hourly. To say nothing of the innumerable regulations which should be at his finger-ends, he must constantly exercise judgment and tact in dealing with officers of various natures and temperaments, and lastly he is the medium of communication between his General and the greater part of the troops. When I first joined the Force there were some who would have ignored a Major of British Infantry; but that sort of thing does not last long, and I at any rate felt, when I left for good, that I was in thorough touch with all, seniors and juniors. Of course, there are many causes for what I have been endeavouring to explain; officers of the British Service are, taken all round, far junior in length of service to Indian Staff Corps officers; hence those serving on the Army Staff are frequently comparatively young men, and occasionally find themselves placed in positions of great trust. Officers of the Indian Army do not always approve of this, especially on active service. Perhaps it is natural, perhaps it has a modicum of reason in it; but on the other hand, officers of the British Service may be well versed in all matters connected with the Native Army, and may have had considerable experience with all classes composing that army.

Fortunately for our rule in India, the officers of both Armies are one and the same, and if there is any difference between them in experience and training, the advantage rests with the Indian Army.

It was in the Tochi Valley that I first met the late Major-General Sir Penn Symons. He was in command of the 2nd Brigade, and although I had served indirectly under his orders in the Chin-Lushai Expedition, I had never had the

honour of meeting him. I accompanied him on a night march on the 13th September, when we were camped at Pir Akai in the Surtoi Valley; it was a very long and hard day's work. We covered twenty-six miles and reached an altitude of 7,000 feet; yet on our return journey the General was the youngest and most sprightly of the Column, and his only complaint to me, made in chaff, was that the advanced guard had no idea of marching and he wished he was a boy again to show them how to move. Our Divisonal D.A.Q.M.G. for Intelligence was Major (now Brigadier-General and D.S.O.) G. V. Kemball, Royal Artillery; we had been at a London tutor's together, and having a great deal in common soon became good friends. His determination to be doing something instead of sitting still impressed itself much on me; we both felt the inaction, and he perhaps even more than I did, for my office work kept me always busy. One day whilst out on a Reconnaissance, we arranged (little thinking it would be so soon) to seek service together in some distant land, where red-books and red-coated chuprasies could not thrive! Two years later I greeted Kemball, as he stepped out of my own launch, hundreds of miles up the Niger in the Hinterlands of West Africa; but I will reserve that for another chapter.

Colonel (now Brigadier-General) John Nixon, 18th Bengal Lancers was our Assistant-Quartermaster General; he has had better opportunities since of showing his worth in South Africa.

On the 20th October the Major-General sent me in command of a small mixed Column from Dutta Khel to secure two Mudda Khels who had taken part in the treacherous attack at Maizar. Their village, Mamiroga, was some ten miles in a southerly direction and a steep hill had to be negotiated. Starting at 2 a.m., we reached and satisfactorily surrounded Mamiroga and secured our men. One shot alone was fired.

During a squabble which took place near the door of the house in which one of the two men had his abode, several arms were captured, amongst them being a loaded rifle, which was taken possession of by a Sepoy. Another Sepoy

secured a ram, which, objecting to be made a prisoner, stood on his hind legs and began a violent attack on his captor. During his struggles one of his feet caught the trigger of the loaded rifle, which went off in the middle of a large crowd of officers and men. Strange to say, no one was hit, though all were considerably scared.

By the middle of November there practically remained nothing for the Force to do; Sudda Khan and several other ringleaders were our prisoners, and I was busy bringing up all arrears of work, when on the morning of the 19th November, 1897, I received a telegram from Simla, forwarding one from the War Office, offering me second in command of the new Force about to be raised on the Niger in West Africa. The offer was naturally an immense surprise; for I knew nothing whatever of the Force except from a paragraph I had read casually in a home paper.

One thing, however, I felt convinced of, and that was that the hand of my friend Fred Lugard must be in it; but then, again, I knew that he was away in the Kalahari Deserts of South Africa, and likely to remain there for some years, and this only puzzled me the more. I have always preferred the jungle, the bush, the wilds, and the freedom they alone can give, to any other life, and my personal wish was to at once accept the offer; still one often has other things to consider; but if I did for a moment hesitate, such hesitation was quickly dispelled, and I telegraphed my acceptance, and with that wire began for me a new life.

I had been long in India; I had served on all its frontiers, I had all my interests and friends in the country, and I knew well and admired its excellent soldiery; but for these very reasons I had, perhaps, begun to think India was the centre of the Empire. It is very easy to have too much of a good thing, and I was gradually losing that touch with our own island that is so necessary to prevent the mind becoming warped and the judgment grooved. The call to serve, therefore, in an entirely new continent and under new masters was a most welcome one.

I instinctively felt I was going where responsibility would

take the place of routine, and freedom of action would be given full play. How far beyond all my expectations was the reality! How thankful am I that I was afforded the one opportunity I had sought for years. To be in a new and unknown land; to rise each morning feeling you had done something out of the humdrum workaday life of ordinary cantonments; these and fifty other thoughts coursed through my brain from the moment I woke and opened my precious telegram.

Four days later, and after I had made all preparations to go, I received a letter from Major Lugard (as he then was), written from South Africa some two or three months previously, and which had followed me to the Tochi. My idea was confirmed; it was he who had asked for my services, and had telegraphed home strongly recommending me as second-in-command of the Force he had been selected by the Colonial Office to raise.

Before the close of November I bid good-bye to many friends and comrades in the Tochi, some of whom fortunately I was again to see in West Africa. The Major-General gave me a farewell dinner, and I was sorry to leave him, for no one ever received greater consideration from his superior. I landed at Dover on 3rd January, 1898. A new and more expansive life had begun, and I felt thankful.

CHAPTER XII

1898

NIGERIA—ARRIVAL AT AXIM—HAUSA AND YORUBA TROOPS—THE ROYAL NIGER COMPANY—THE WEST AFRICAN FRONTIER FORCE—IN CONTACT WITH THE FRENCH OUTPOSTS—A CRITICAL SITUATION—A MORAL VICTORY

I REMAINED in London two months, during which time I was very busily employed in the Colonial Office. Of all the men I have ever met I never knew one who equalled Lugard as a persistent hard worker. He has his own hours, which do not suit everybody, and he has his own methods of work; but if you wish to succeed with him you must adapt yourself to both. I knew this partly, years back, and soon learnt to sit up to all hours of the morning. The amount of detail he settled, and the innumerable Tables, regulations, and orders that were prepared in this short time was astonishing; I was already learning that nothing chokes business and hinders real progress so much as having too many hands to evolve it, and I cannot remember feeling so pleased with any office work I ever had to do as I was after a month in Colonial employ.

I sailed from Liverpool on the 4th March, 1898, in Elder Dempster and Company's steamer *Benin*, and arrived at Sierra Leone on the 19th.

My first view of West Africa was an agreeable surprise, for Sierra Leone, whatever else it is, is decidedly beautiful. The wondrous green, and the heights overlooking the harbour, are not easily forgotten. We went ashore, and I engaged a servant, Fode by name, a Susu, or inhabitant of the French Hinterlands behind Sierra Leone; he turned out

a most faithful, excellent fellow, and at once gave me a liking for the real inland natives. We called in at two Liberian ports, and anchored in Axim Harbour on the 24th March. The *Benin* was a small steamer of a very obsolete type, and a large number of her hands bore the name of Roberts; I can recall the Captain, one of his officers, and the Chief Steward even now. When one compares her with the really first-class steamers, which the energy and foresight of Sir Alfred Jones, of Liverpool, West African, and West Indian fame has now provided for this trade, it is nothing short of extraordinary what wonderful advances these Colonies have made since they came under the influence of Mr. Chamberlain.

The night on the *Benin* off Axim roads seemed, for a few minutes to us on board, as if it was to be her last above the waters, for at about nine o'clock, just as we had come up on deck from dinner, a furious tornado burst over us, the first I had seen; the darkness was intense, and I, for one, had little faith either in the stability of the ship or the quality of her gear and fittings. It was not long before we began to pitch heavily, an unpleasant thing on that shallow surf-beaten coast, and from the rushing about of the crew, and the many orders being issued, I thought something must be wrong. Suddenly there was a crash, and we realised that the good ship *Benin* was bumping on a rock, or something equally hard. However, she continued to pitch for a few minutes, when bang! another bump, and everything on the ship trembled. None too soon, we got up our anchor and steamed into deep water. I was not reassured when I saw the ship's carpenter hurrying past shortly afterwards to report progress as to the leakage caused by our bumping. Voyaging to West Africa was still in 1898 done on very primitive principles. No one cared very much whether they took fifteen days or thirty to get to the Coast, very few bothered themselves about such trifling details as messing or cabin accommodation. On the *Benin* our saloon was altogether too small for the number of passengers; the sanitary arrangements were nil, and there

was but one exceedingly dirty-looking bathroom; this I had intended to use the first day out at sea, but, fortunately, happening to be passing the door after dinner, I found it had to serve many purposes, and was then doing duty as a pantry and washtub for the silver and dishes. I did not use that bath, but contented myself with borrowing a very antiquated-looking kind of tin case, which had served Lugard as a tub and kit-box in one, in all parts of Africa. It was typical of the man; he stuck to an old friend although to all intents and purposes it was played out.

As a proof of the absolute indifference with which the safety of passengers was regarded, I may mention that whilst we were dancing on a rock in Axim it was suggested that it might be as well if we passengers set to and got ready one of the boats, as there were some women and children on board. I was coolly informed by a ship's officer that no boats could possibly be lowered as they were all filled with ·303 ammunition and explosives for the West African Frontier Force. On my expressing my astonishment, he replied in quite an offended manner, "Well, it is far the safest place for them, and we have not an inch of room elsewhere. Besides, after all, it is for you and your Force." I was fast learning something of West African methods. Another amusing incident was that the Chief Steward was at first unable to get into the refrigerating room, as there was so much coal heaped on the decks that it was impossible to open the door, and a way had to be made by the crew.

Most of the passengers went ashore at Axim and played in a cricket match; on their return I asked one of them what kind of game they had had, but all I could get out of him was, "Lord knows how many times I went in; I forget now!" We called at Cape Coast Castle, and little did I dream, as we lay rolling within a mile of the old Fort, that within two years it would be the one place in the world where my attention would be fixed, and that with longing eyes and anxious heart I should be scanning the waters fifty times a day, praying God that the ships with troops for the relief of Kumassi might arrive in time. Thus sometimes it

happens that what we think is only an unimportant incident turns out to be the most important in our lives.

On the 30th March we anchored off the French settlement of Kotenou, the landing place for Dahomey. I was very anxious to see what manner of place this might be, so went ashore in one of the ship's boats.

The French, with their lavish ideas of expenditure in matters colonial, have erected, at great cost, a pier which runs out a considerable distance from the shore, and enables them to land cargo and embark passengers without the danger of running in and out by surf boats. It is, in any case, no easy matter even as it is, for everything has to be raised from or lowered into the boats by baskets worked on a pulley. I got on to the pier safely, and walked over the place; it consisted then of a few tin-roofed houses and a post and telegraph office. I saw one or two Europeans sitting at the doors of their uncomfortable-looking residences, apparently thoroughly bored. There were no roads, and hardly a tree; in fact, Kotenou, as I saw it, might have been an enlarged Gare on the Suez Canal, without any of the latter's small excitements or advantages.

I soon had enough of this uninteresting place, and returned to the pier; but I was now on French and not British soil, and of this I was quickly made aware, for the official in charge, before letting me embark, demanded a landing fee of fifteen francs. I at once made up my mind, at any cost, to refuse payment; and mustering up my best French, told him so.

He shrugged his shoulders in the manner his countrymen have, and said I could not leave till I had paid. I was ushered into a small room, and asked my name and address. My friend then became communicative, and began to ask me all sorts of questions. I did not trouble him with many replies, but I let him know I was going with Colonel Lugard to Borgu. Now Borgu and Lugard were two words, at that time, not at all palatable in Dahomey, and I distinctly created an impression. However, our conversation continued very amicable throughout.

Eventually, as I made no signs of paying, and, in fact,

was prepared to remain an unwilling guest of the Government rather than be fleeced, I was warned against repeating the offence and allowed to embark.

We left the *Benin* on 31st March off Lagos roads, after a voyage of twenty-seven days, and crossed the bar of the river in a smaller steamer. Lugard and I were invited to occupy Government House, but the Governor himself was away in the Hinterlands, in connection with the French troubles in Borgu. Owing to the kindness of Mr. Archer, the Acting Colonial Secretary, and his wife, we were enabled to procure some food and drink, as nothing was to be had in the house itself, nor were there any servants. In fact, I had been obliged to go into the town and purchase some biscuits and tea, and get some water boiled by the guard on duty at the building. I was gradually being initiated into the uncertainties of the West Coast. After waiting four days at Lagos, during which time Lugard was occasionally in telegraphic communication with the Governor, we sailed in the branch boat *Ibadan* for Forcados, at the mouth of the Niger. If the *Benin* had been uncomfortable, the *Ibadan*, as we found her, without ballast, was a perfect pandemonium. It is impossible to describe the noise and tremor in our cabins and saloon, or what went by these names, both immediately over the screw, which was always half, and mostly entirely, out of the water. The steering chains passed through the room, and their rattle and clang was something dreadful; you could not make yourself heard without shouting, and as it blew half a gale most of the time, it was an experience one would not wish repeated. I was taking a servant to Lokoja for one of our officers, and on entering my cabin to avoid the rain from an approaching tornado I found this person comfortably asleep in the berth. He went by the name of "Sea Breeze," and I very soon hauled him out and taught him a first lesson in military discipline.

On 6th April we left Burutu, the Royal Niger Company's port, and started up the great river in the screw launch *Zaria*. Besides Lugard and myself, we had Mr. King, the

chief clerk. He had formerly served in the Royal Artillery, had a great aptitude for work, and possessed the discipline acquired from military service, and was a nice companion.

In addition there were several servants and the crew; had this been all we might have been averagely comfortable; but when you add that we were carrying office baggage, food and drink for many months, military stores, and every other kind of service equipment, you can form some idea of the positive discomfort of that boat. In fact, as I approached our destination I daily got to understand that comfort and exploration are things entirely apart. I must own, however, that such discomfort has many advantages. You are not bound by any rules in these wild lands; you wear clothes because, if you do not, you get burnt by the sun and eaten by mosquitoes; you eat with a knife and fork because it is more convenient than doing so with your fingers; and you shave your face and brush your hair because you cannot get on without, and both add to your comfort; but beyond these you may do as you please. You eat when you are hungry, and not because it is a certain hour of the day; you tub wherever it suits you to do so, and, in short, you take things as they come.

Steaming up the muddy waters of the Niger recalled similar days on the Brahmaputra, in Assam, and, of course, there always is a certain likeness in tropical rivers which flow through vast plains. But the Brahmaputra is quite commonplace; a regular mail service is established there; meals are served on white tablecloths at fixed hours; Bengali Babus in patent leather shoes, and very loose and airy substitutes for trousers, loll about the decks; and you must sometimes show your tickets, etc. Here on this glorious waste of waters none of these pests existed. The boat was very cramped, but what of that? Did we not feel we were the pioneers of a new Force; could we not realise the fact that we too were taking our share in Empire building? Lugard was an old hand; the Niger was to him only a well-known friend revisited; he had sailed on Nyassa, and left Uganda behind him; but I was only a beginner, and felt

like a child with a new toy as we steamed up the Niger to an unknown land.

For a moment put yourself in my place, and contemplate the scene as the sun is setting. The waters, though thick and muddy, are churning all round the small launch in mighty eddies, swallowing up any logs, grasses, or other things floating on the surface; the grunt of a hippo in his favourite pool calls up your sporting instincts—you start to look in the direction of the sound; all is still, except a small whirlpool which betrays where the monster has submerged himself; a sharp, clean, rasping sound makes you look overhead, and a flight of parrots whistles over the boat at lightning speed; there are hundreds, and yet each would be worth a lot of money in England—it is like a shower of loose silver flying through space. One feels happy that they are free, and they give you an extra relish for freedom, the most priceless gift any man can enjoy.

Suddenly you turn a bend and run close past a village. It is full of naked men, women, and children, who stand and gaze at the mysterious white men going against the stream; but it is a lesson in practical humanity. Poor creatures! you feel sorry for them; and yet they are probably happier than we in the boat—happier in their own lights; their wants are small, they have all they can expect or, indeed, wish for, and when their turn comes to die of malaria, or other kindred disease, others will take their place. A death means an extra good feed for the living and plenty of drumming; so living or dead they have the satisfaction of helping their comrades—a thing we cannot always say of ourselves. And now darkness is fast approaching; the launch comes to anchor, the throb of the engines ceases, you are floating in silence on the waters of the great Quarra, the black river. Overhead shine the stars; on either side of you loom giant trees, embedded in massive creepers and ferns, and you feel you are really communing with nature. Hark! away in the distance you can just hear a sound which appears as if struggling to break a way through the impenetrable network of tree and forest; it increases, then it dies down, and

now again rises in moans, and finally bursts forth in its fury.

The topmost branches near you sway violently; birds start from their resting-places; the waters patter against the sides of the launch, and she swings round against the natural current; you are about to experience a Niger tornado. It is not long coming now; the awnings flap violently over the side, the swish of the water warns you to hold fast and look to your anchor chain; the rush of tropical rain is like a bursting dam, and the feeble lights of all kinds are instantly extinguished. But you need no artificial lighting here, the works of God are mightier than all our feeble efforts; the blinding lightning is in perfect harmony with the crashing thunder, and you feel how utterly small and insignificant you are, as rocking in the midst of all this tempest you can hardly realise that it is of almost daily occurrence here at certain seasons of the year, and has been so for centuries back. But it is all past now; the black skipper is relighting the tallow dips, the launch is riding at anchor as if unconscious of all the turmoil, and you are once again back in the dull reality of existence. Next morning you steam away and soon forget that you have seen anything out of the common.

We grounded on a few sandbanks, ran full speed into a paddle steamer, and performed a few other feats; but Providence watches over one in these lands, and by its aid we arrived at Abutchi, one of the Niger Company's stations. Here we found H.M. Gunboats *Heron* and *Jackdaw* (which were then doing duty on the river), Commanders Melville and Bellairs.

It was most pleasant to meet bluejackets again, and to feel that come what would we should have the handy man to help us. Much palavering followed, during which Melville, like the thorough seaman he is, agreed to help Lugard in every possible way, and to sink regulations for the time being. That this was an excellent arrangement may be gathered from the fact that at Abutchi alone we found thousands of articles forming portions of the wooden huts

which were supposed to be in course of erection at Lokoja, then the headquarters of the West African Frontier Force.

Melville undertook to do all he could to hasten these up the river, and to assist in transporting officers and stores. We reached Lokoja on the 10th April, and I made my first acquaintance with the soldiers of the Company's Constabulary and the recruits of our own Frontier Force, who were being raised and drilled as fast as Colonel Pilcher, of the Northumberland Fusiliers, could enlist them. Lokoja is situated at the confluence of the rivers Niger and Benue, and is a very good site for a military cantonment. It was the headquarters station of the Niger Company, and quite a civilised place, with a Store where you could purchase various supplies. The Constabulary officers had a very comfortable mess, and were most hospitable. Once at Lokoja, you are in the open Hinterlands of Nigeria; the dark forests and swamps of the lower Niger are no longer to be found; the surrounding country is hilly, and game is fairly plentiful. Lokoja now boasts a good polo ground, as these go in West Africa; for many months of the year you can ride into the interior, and shooting can be had within reasonable limits; in fact, there are many worse places elsewhere, with a far better name. When we first arrived there, some three hundred men of the Constabulary were away on an expedition to Argungu, many hundred miles up the Niger. Major Arnold, D.S.O., Commandant of the Corps, was with them, and we expected any day to hear of fighting; but the scare which had been caused, and which I remember created considerable excitement in England before Lugard and I left it, afterwards turned out to have little foundation, as the party of supposed Frenchmen which had been reported to have crossed the Niger above the tenth parallel, and to have entered territory claimed by the Niger Company, turned out in reality to be somebody else. It was currently reported afterwards that they were a party of traders run by some Germans. In any case they made themselves scarce as soon as they found the Company's troops were on the move in their direction.

What had surprised me most, so far, in Nigeria had been the comparative coolness of the temperature. The nights were always cool, almost cold; and the days never approached the terrible summer heat of the Indian plains; I wore a soft felt terai hat, and I certainly should never try that in India. Anyone who has shot in May and June in the Central Provinces or the Punjab and not suffered from the heat could afford to laugh at the West African sun. There are other severe drawbacks, of course, but as a sun heat it bears no comparison to India in my opinion. At Lokoja I met most of the officers with whom I should have to serve my first year, and I was at once put at my ease as to the results. The 1st Battalion of the Force was commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel Pilcher, of the Northumberland Fusiliers; he has since made a name in South Africa, and although only a Captain when he first joined the W.A.F.F. in 1897, is now a Brevet Colonel, C.B., and A.D.C. to the King. He had his own ideas on all matters concerning soldiering, but when we got to understand one another I found his keenness and his fondness for his men a great help in the formation of the Force. Captain Wilkinson, of the same regiment, was his Adjutant; he is now a Brevet Lieutenant-Colonel, and commands the Gold Coast Regiment of the new W.A.F.F. The Artillery, then only in its infancy, was commanded by Major Robinson, R.A., who has since seen much service with a Horse Battery in South Africa; but were I to mention the names of all the officers who assembled on the Lokoja parade-ground for inspection by Colonel Lugard, it would fill a by no means poor page in the history of the great South African War, of which no one then dreamed. It was on the same parade that I first walked down the ranks of the Hausa and Yoruba recruits, whom I was soon to know so well. As I looked in their black faces I must own I was not impressed as I had expected to be from all I had read of them in many a well-contested fight.

They seemed dull and lacking in intelligence. Maybe they are both, but I now feel almost ashamed of my own want of knowledge in reading human nature when I recall

how I left that parade, disappointed. Time has proved me entirely wrong; unswerving loyalty to their officers, and patient endurance of hardship in the most trying forms, have convinced me that excellent material exists in those far regions for making splendid soldiers. This I hope I shall be able to show in these pages; and I can honestly say to-day, if I had my choice once more, nowhere would I sooner serve than with my faithful Hausas and Yorubas, whom I learned to admire, and whose reputation is very precious to me.

We arrived at Jebba on the 17th April, and anchored off the island. The scenery all round is exceedingly fine; from a hill on the south bank the long reaches of the Niger can be seen winding through forests to the east. A mile away to the north stands out the bold "Bee," or "Juju" Rock, a sheer cliff in the centre of the stream; and the only flat and uninteresting spot is the island in mid-stream, on which my home was to be for over a year. There was plenty of exciting news, which promised well for the future; but that I will defer to the next chapter, and meantime I will shortly explain the reasons which led to the formation of the West African Frontier Force, and, hence, how it came to be my good fortune to be sent out to the Niger.

The history of the Royal Niger Company is too well known to all who take any interest in the great trading and colonising powers of our nation to need any recapitulation here; but it is necessary for my story to state briefly the position of affairs as they stood in 1897.

Between 1884 and that year the hitherto almost unknown territories of the Hinterlands of the Niger had been gradually opening out. In addition to the efforts of our own countrymen and the Company, the French had made prodigious strides; one expedition had followed another, all with the selfsame object, viz. to obtain a footing in the Niger territories and give the appearance of legitimate permanence. Colonel Monteil penetrated to the shores of Lake Chad, in the heart of Central North Africa; Lieutenant Mizon, undeterred by one futile attempt, made a second one to reach the great



THE NIGER, FROM JEBBA ISL'

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lake in 1892, but failure was again his lot, and he was recalled by his Government, on the representation of the Niger Company that he was in reality carrying on his operations in their own undisputed territory. These expeditions were followed by others, but it was not until 1894 that the French showed their hand plainly, and it then became evident that their efforts were directed primarily to the occupation of Borgu, on the right bank of the Niger, and immediately north of the limits of our Hinterlands, in the colony of Lagos. But although this tract was specially selected, it only formed part of a vast scheme to connect the whole of their West African Colonies from Senegal to Dahomey, and by gaining a footing on the lower Niger, to have means of semi-inland communication with their possessions on the Congo. Captain Decœur was the officer selected by the French Government to carry out the task of absorbing Borgu, and in July, 1894, he left France for Dahomey. He, in fact, started with the avowed object of entering and annexing a country which by priority of right was under the overlordship of the Royal Niger Company. This Company had, in 1890, concluded a treaty with the Borgu King; when, therefore, Sir George Goldie learnt that an expedition was starting for Borgu he at once arranged, with that shrewd quickness for which he is so remarkable, to play a trump card. Of all the cards in the pack, the one he altogether desired to avoid was the knave, and hence, to carry out his scheme his choice fell on Captain Frederick Lugard, who was already known to fame for his Empire work in East Africa.

Quickly and firmly Lugard carried out his mission. Hurrying to West Africa, he was in Borgu before his French rival knew of his presence.

Crossing routes hitherto unknown to Europeans, overcoming every kind of obstacle, brushing aside the enemies who swarmed in his path and attempted to stop his progress, he arrived at Nikki, the capital of the country, and interviewed the King. I can imagine that interview. The African Chief and the lean, wiry Englishman looking at each other must have been worth seeing.

The Nikki King had not known white men, and this particular white man had a great advantage over him; for he had interviewed many African Chiefs in many lands, and was at home in his rôle of treaty-maker. Five days before Decœur arrived with the Tricolour at Nikki, Lugard had left that town with his treaty in his pocket. A poisoned arrow in the skull, which was extracted by one of his soldiers placing his heavy hoof on the head and tugging the iron out with his hand, was all he had to show for his exploit, but it was an honourable scar, and Borgu became British soil.

The Frenchman contended that Lugard had made his treaty not with the real King, but with an inferior Chief; nevertheless the French mission was withdrawn, and returned to Dahomey. But in 1896 the French, finding that the Niger Company had other difficulties to contend with, took the opportunity of renewing their claims to Borgu, and proceeded to invade it.

It had now become a question which of the two Powers could occupy the greater number of Posts in the disputed territory, and each proceeded to the task with vigour. This territory may roughly be described as all the country situated on the right bank from Say, on the middle Niger, to the frontier line between Lagos and Dahomey, where it is intersected by the ninth parallel of latitude. Matters, of course, could not continue long in this state, and the Royal Niger Company with its limited means, its vast responsibilities over an enormous tract of country, and its comparatively very small military Force, found itself helpless in the face of a great European Power, determined on pushing its encroachments. Then it was that the Colonial Office determined to do what no Chartered Company could have done, viz. to raise an Imperial Force, arm and equip it with the best possible material, officer it from the Regular Army, with a sprinkling of good Militiamen, and give it a sound backbone in the shape of selected British Non-commissioned officers. The supreme command of the new Force was offered to Major Lugard, who was then doing other work in the



Photo by Elliott & Fry.

BRIGADIER-GENERAL SIR FREDERICK LUGARD, K.C.M.G., C.B., D.S.O.

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extreme west of the Kalahari Desert of South Africa; but the Colonial Office when they want officers do not recognise mere physical distance as any bar; a month or two would not be lost in waiting for the man who could do the difficult work that was required; and so from these distant deserts Lugard plodded over sand and veldt until he reached the sea and sailed over its waters. With his acceptance of the command my chance came also; from South Africa to London, from London to the North-West Frontiers of India, his message was flashed over the wires, and soon I was on my way to join the Chief who had honoured me by selecting me as his second-in-command. It was not, however, enough for him that the Force should be well equipped only, but with much foresight he recognised that the equipment should be of the very best that money can buy. There were not a few who cavilled at the idea of taking to the Niger the most modern field-guns, specially constructed for carrier transport, to be placed in the hands of black troops. There were others who prophesied that the experiment would prove a farce; but there were hardly any who foresaw not only that it was no farce, but that a day was almost within sight when it would be these same guns that would prove the salvation of the columns operating in the Hinterlands of the Gold Coast for the relief of Kumassi.

The West African Frontier Force was the designation by which the Brigade in Northern Nigeria was to be known; this was soon shortened into the initials W.A.F.F. by us all, and from the day any European joined he was commonly known as one of the WAFF's, to distinguish him from officers of the West African Constabularies. The formation of an Imperial Force for employment in the Hinterlands was a completely new departure for this part of Africa. The Constabularies of the different West Coast Colonies had each done good work in its day, but events were now marching rapidly, and their day was past. Two other great European Powers were firmly established in this part of the continent, and England had to be prepared not only to hold her own against the natives, but possibly against one of these also.

The constitution of the different Government Constabularies varied considerably; their officers were in some cases soldiers only in name, and some few had neither served in the Army nor in the Militia; the native officers were quite unfitted to hold any kind of independent command, the N.C.O.'s were sadly deficient in the very rudiments of military knowledge, and the men, though a certain proportion belonged to fighting classes, possessed no proper *esprit de corps*, and were very badly trained. Musketry was a name only, and the necessity for furnishing small detachments and constant escorts on semi-civil duties precluded the possibility of combined training of any sort. West Africa had a bad name, and many white men only went there because the pay was good and the life one of comparative freedom. The Royal Niger Company's Constabulary, on the other hand, was not a Government Force at all, and was composed of Hausas from the Hausa states proper, Yorubas from the countries in the north of the Lagos colony, and there were also a large number of men from various localities in the Company's territories along the rivers Niger and Benue. This force was officered from the Regular Army and Militia, and there were, in addition, a few civilians who performed quasi-military duties. The Company's Constabulary had done some excellent work in the past; it had taken part in many a smart expedition, it had the Bida and Illorin campaigns to its credit, and was sufficiently well disciplined for all purposes for which it was likely to be required. But now that serious complications were fast arising, it became evident that neither in numbers nor in its composition was the Force sufficient to meet the strain. The command of these troops was then held by Major Arnold, D.S.O., an officer possessed of great organising powers combined with remarkable application and knowledge of details.

It was largely due to him that the Constabulary had carried out its various duties successfully. He knew nearly every man in the ranks, and did his duty thoroughly conscientiously; also he was fortunate in having under his command many good officers; for instance, Major Festing,

D.S.O., of the Royal Irish Rifles, who was much liked by his black soldiers; Lieutenant Engelbach, of the Buffs, afterwards killed in South Africa; and others whose names are familiar on the Niger. But you cannot make bricks without straw, and this is what it struck me was expected of the officers of the Royal Niger Constabulary. The men were well paid, but in reality this payment was given in kind, which may or may not have represented something approaching the nominal sum. Their clothing was bad and scandalously deficient; their arms consisted of old worn-out Snider rifles; their accoutrements were a mere mass of rubbish. What these might once have been I cannot say, but this actually describes their state when I first saw them.

The strength of the W.A.F. Force, as sanctioned in 1898, was as follows:—Headquarters Staff, three officers; one company of Engineers, with five British N.C.O.'s, twenty Madras (Indian) Sappers and Miners, and twenty-six local Sappers; a telegraph section of one officer and twelve European N.C.O.'s, all belonging to the Royal Engineers; three Field Batteries of Artillery; two of these were of four 7-pounder M.L. guns each, and the third, or reserve Battery, was armed with six B.L. 12½-pounder Maxim-Nordenfelts, commonly known to us as the '75 Millimètre Battery. These Batteries employed seven officers and eighteen N.C.O.'s of the Royal Artillery, and the native ranks numbered one hundred and fifty-five N.C.O.'s and gunners, all real Hausas. The Infantry consisted of two battalions of eight companies each, with a total for both of fifty-eight officers from the Regulars and Militia, eighty-eight Warrant and N.C.O.'s from the Regular Army, and two thousand four hundred native N.C.O.'s and men. Each battalion was allowed a band of thirty-four men, under a European instructor. Two Field hospitals and a Base hospital, with nine civilian medical officers and eighteen R.A.M. Corps N.C.O.'s, completed the strength of the force, to which were also attached, for the first time in West Africa, three nursing sisters, of whom I shall tell later.

The Supply and Transport department was not for-

gotten, but this underwent many changes as the Force developed.

I have gone, perhaps, into rather uninteresting details regarding the composition of the Force, but my excuse is that it was a new experiment, and the nature of the duties shortly to fall on it were so varied that it will help those who take an interest in West African affairs to better understand what strength was available for carrying out the orders of Government, and, eventually, how it became possible for General Lugard to not only hold his own in Nigeria, but to spare no less than one thousand two hundred men in 1900 for the relief of Kumassi—an operation which could never, by any possibility, have been carried out but for his help. Even if the Frontier Force had never done anything else, it would, in a monetary sense, have paid Government to have raised and equipped it, for the fall of Kumassi would have cost more to retrieve than any sums that had then been spent on the troops who carried out its relief. The two main classes which were being enlisted in the new force were Hausas and Yorubas. The Hausas are Mahomedans, and their country proper lies beyond the Niger and north of the Benue River. The Yorubas, for the general purposes of this book, may be described as the inhabitants proper of the Lagos Hinterlands as far north as the ninth parallel. In addition to these two races a company of Nupés, inhabitants of the portion of the Niger about Egga, was eventually included in the strength. It had apparently been a creed in West Africa that the finest and, in fact, the only real fighting man enlisted by the Constabularies was the Hausa. The term Hausa had gradually become the synonym for soldier, as in India one heard of the Sepoy Army. In reality, however, as the word Sepoy had frequently been indiscriminately used to describe many races of Sepoys or soldiers, so Hausa was the word which had become the equivalent of the Constabulary soldier of West Africa. Thus one reads of the Lagos Hausas, the Gold Coast Hausas, etc. In truth, however, very few indeed of the genuine article were to be found in the ranks, except in

those of the Royal Niger Company's troops. These latter had the immense advantage of being quartered near the Hausa States, and hence were able to obtain men direct from their homes. The Hausa, besides being a born fighter, is a born trader; he travels all over West and Central West Africa; every caravan going north or south consists largely of men of the race; hence Hausas are to be found in all our West Coast colonies.

The Yoruba, on the other hand, sticks more to his own country, and seldom wanders north of the bend of the Niger. The Nupés, again, are river folk, boatmen, fishermen, etc., and had never been properly tested as soldiers.

After some considerable experience of these races in the Field (the only true, proper test of their qualities), I have no hesitation in saying that, in my opinion, the Hausa, though possessing more *élan*, is not by any means so superior as to entitle him to the sole right to be considered a fighting man in West Africa. The Yoruba is more amenable to discipline, cleaner, and more intelligent. He is equally good in endurance—a trait possessed in quite a remarkable degree by both races; he is as faithful to his officers and British N.C.O.'s, and appears to strive more than the Hausa to acquire the knowledge requisite to a fighting man. It would, I think, be difficult to choose between one or other for ordinary expeditionary work in the Hinterlands; but there can be no doubt that a combination of both brings out the good and bad points of each, creates emulation, and greatly helps towards keeping down the spirit of insubordination which is not unfrequently shown by all African natives. It would therefore be well, for the present at any rate, to have all corps constituted on the Class-company system; for I do not believe it would be judicious or even safe to form purely Class battalions. In Northern Nigeria, at any rate, for years to come, our troops must be scattered over hundreds of miles of territory, and to entrust the guardianship of these entirely to men of the same race and creed as the vanquished, might lead to serious complications and danger. The Nupés on two or three occasions were able to prove that, when

judiciously handled and led, this class of native can be made a fairly good soldier; but the Nupé does not compare with either Hausa or Yoruba.

Fortunately for Colonel Lugard, when he first started the organisation of the Brigade, peace reigned almost throughout the Empire, and hence he was enabled not only to obtain the voluntary services of large numbers of the best officers and N.C.O.'s, but even to pick and choose, if necessary. Most of those who then joined the force confidently believed they were going out to immediate active service; and although some must needs have been disappointed, a very large proportion had plenty of hard and active work to keep them fully employed. It was, at any rate, no longer a case of taking men who were only going because the pay was good, but, on the contrary, amongst them was a very large proportion who only joined because they hoped to see some service, and who had their whole heart in the work. Later on, when South Africa began to drain the manhood of the Empire, times changed sadly for the W.A.F.F., but even then we retained a fair number of keen youngsters, who had no desire to desert the ranks which they had helped to fill; and many of these, I rejoice to say, were rewarded for their *esprit de corps* and self-sacrifice, when at last a campaign, on a big scale for West Africa, gave them an opportunity of serving their country. Amongst these, none deserved it better than Lieutenant (now Brevet Major) Bryan, of the Manchester Regiment; Captain (now Brevet Lieutenant-Colonel, local Colonel, and D.S.O.) Morland, of the 60th Rifles; Captain (now Brevet Major) Eden, Oxford Light Infantry, and others whose names will appear in this book.

Alas! a few, had they lived, were certain of a brilliant career, and amongst these the name of Captain the Hon. R. F. Somerset, of the Grenadier Guards, Adjutant of the 2nd Battalion, comes at once to memory. A more gallant gentleman, a braver or truer soldier and more conscientious servant of the Queen never lived. He was a tower of strength in himself, and literally gave his life in the performance of his duty. "Dick" Somerset, as he was



CAPTAIN THE HON. RICHARD SOMERSET

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familiarly known, left a gap which was not filled whilst I served in West Africa. Others there were whose duty obliged them to leave for the great struggle in South Africa, and whose names are sufficient guarantee of what they did for their black soldiers, but these are too many to be recounted here. I would, however, mention Brevet Major Booth, of the Northumberland Fusiliers; he acted as one of my Staff officers for many months, and I can only hope it may be my great good fortune to meet his like again in the Field; brave and honest, he died at Sanna's Post as he had always lived, an English gentleman and a Christian God-fearing man.

I have tried to describe shortly the constitution of the West African Frontier Force, as raised by Colonel Lugard under the orders of the Colonial Office, and it is the doings of this Force on the Niger, and subsequently in Ashanti, that I shall now endeavour to relate.

CHAPTER XIII

1898

ENGLISH AND FRENCH IN BORGU AND ILLORIN—FIRST MEETING WITH FRENCH OUTPOSTS—A CRITICAL SITUATION—THE NIGER CONVENTION

JEBBA, which for various reasons Lugard was obliged to select as our future headquarters, is perhaps as flat, stale, and unprofitable a place as you could find, even in West Africa. There is absolutely nothing to interest you. The great river flows through a gorge on the west and south of the island, and is here very deep at all times of the year; on the north-east and east it passes over rocks, and the country beyond is flat. When you have said this much there is little else to say, and you must make up your mind that hard work, and that alone, will keep you fit.

After we had been on the Niger some months, we arranged a double dug-out canoe ferry, which enabled us to cross our ponies over to either bank; English boats were obtained; I began a polo ground, which later was made into quite a good one; cricket, football, and tennis were also added, and a small racecourse, where one could indulge in a gallop in the mornings.

All these were paid for from funds partly given outright and partly advanced by the Colonial Office; for that department of the State recognised the fact that the health of white men was as essential to success in all its operations as anything else. The money was well spent, for as recreations increased, health improved; and with health, of course, strength and zeal.



ON THE NIGER'S BANKS

DRAWING BY LADY HELEN GRAHAM

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We only remained a day at Jebba, and then proceeded up the Niger as far as Fort Goldie; this was the new name for a small palisaded defence work on the right bank of the Niger, immediately opposite Bajibo, and thirty miles from Jebba.

This portion of the river had but once been explored by steamer, and it was a very risky experiment, for dangerous rocks and shoals abound; but we got there all right. Fort Goldie was in Borgu, which was then occupied by the French, and we soon discovered that within a few miles of us a small French detachment had planted the tricolour flag on a rock midstream. We were, therefore, temporarily at the end of our tether. Soon after anchoring, we were visited by the King of Bajibo and his retinue! His sable Majesty must have been in dire straits; he had seen within a few years a French flag, then an English one, and had lately witnessed the march of a large column of troops, accompanied by Mounted Infantry, on its way to expel the foreign intruders who had ventured across the Niger from the west into Argungu. Now lying off his town was a white man's steamer, whistling and puffing forth great columns of black smoke.

It was my first experience of a formal visit from a black Chief. We received a very ancient fowl and five rotten eggs as a *dash*, or visiting present, and after a long palaver our dusky friend departed. He informed us that the French had a big force at Kyama, about sixty miles to the westward, in Borgu, and that they also had many Posts in the Hinterland from Dahomey to the Niger.

We returned to Jebba on the 20th of April, where we met Mr. Wallace, Agent-General of the Royal Niger Company. The Company's troops had just been placed under Colonel Lugard's orders, and there were many matters needing settlement. Business was much assisted by the telegraph, which was fast being pushed up from Lagos direct to Jebba, on which Captain Turner, R.E., was doing excellent work.

It was plain that the position between us and the French could not continue as at present, and Lugard at once decided

to send a strong Column, *viâ* Fort Goldie, into Borgu, and there assert our undoubted rights. Needless to say, the cup of my joy was full to overflowing when he asked me to go in command; and although I knew my absence would throw an immense amount of extra work on him, I, of course, felt pleased to have such an important charge; and also I felt sure I was better acquainted with his wishes, and could therefore better carry out his plans, than any other officer there.

I was very soon busy preparing for my first expedition in West Africa; most of the men were to be Niger Company's soldiers, with as many of our first battalion as were then fitted for escort and guard duties. I had some twelve officers and a few British non-commissioned officers, and about twenty ponies for riding purposes. The carriers were eventually to consist of three hundred local people, but we had very few of this lot at first.

Lugard left for Lokoja, and I thus found myself local Chief, and "on my own," for there was no quicker means of communicating with him then than by canoe.

At this time, I must explain, the northern frontiers of Lagos were held by our troops, but the large and important town of Kishi, on the ninth (or still disputed) parallel of latitude, was in possession of the French. The ninth parallel marked the boundary of Lagos on its north, and formed the southern limit of Borgu. The French had established Posts all over this country, as will be seen by the map at the end of this chapter. They had pushed their outposts right into the Company's territories, until, at this time, they were not only in occupation of some of our largest towns in the Hinterland, but had garrisons in Illo and Boussa, on the Niger, and detachments within a day's march of Fort Goldie itself.

There could be but one ending to this game of bluff—either we must withdraw and acknowledge ourselves powerless in the matter, or the French must quit. In Lugard we had a man who would never withdraw except under compulsion from home; and fortunately for our prestige the

leaves, and sprawl somehow on to a waterproof sheet, and you are settled down for the journey.

The heat is appalling, the glare from the water very trying to the eyes, and your temper is gradually becoming very bad, when the head-man coolly announces to you that two of the canoe men have gone to the village to get chop, but will be back "plenty soon." Wearily you once again emerge from the black hole and get under shade on the bank. At last the two delinquents turn up, and after greeting them in no friendly spirit you are about to take your seat finally, as you hope; but in savage Africa the white man's burden must be borne patiently, or, at least, with as much patience as he can muster. This time it is the boy who has run back to camp, as master's boots have been forgotten. He too, eventually arrives, and like a hunted tiger you crawl into your lair, breathing death to the very next person who dares to intrude on you.

A few shouts, a splash, a lurch, and your top-heavy ship leaves the bank, and you are fairly launched on your voyage. No need to describe the rest; a few days later, raw with mosquito bites and stiff with cramp, you are glad indeed to bid farewell to the canoe and its crew.

As a reserve at Fort Goldie I had H.M. gunboat *Heron*, Commander Melville; he had arrived at Jebba just before I left it, and had offered to come up so far in case of complications with the French. It was a most risky operation on that unsurveyed portion of the river, with its innumerable rocks and shifting sands, but there are not many things a naval officer will not risk when business is meant, and it was a splendid sight to watch, as we did, a smart gunboat steaming at full speed after she got into the long reach opposite Fort Goldie. It would have been difficult to find a better answer to foreign aggression than this sudden appearance on the river of a ship armed with modern guns and manned by British sailors. I looked with pride as the *Heron* dropped her anchor in midstream, and if I had had any doubts as to our succeeding in our undertaking, the sight of that smart little fighting ship soon dissipated them.

On the 1st of May the advanced party, under command of Captain Welch, Hampshire Regiment, with Lieutenant Mangles, the Queen's, left for Kanikoko, about fifty miles inland. The remainder followed next day, and thus at last we were really on active service in West Africa.

My orders to Welch were to advance as far as Kyama if he found no French troops, and to halt not closer than two miles from their fort, pitch camp, and hoist the Union Jack. Should he come across them before, then he was to halt and adopt the same tactics. My own distinct instructions were that I should endeavour by every means in my power to avoid firing the first shot; but that should I be fired upon under any circumstances, I was immediately to take matters into my own hand and assert our authority in all and every part of Borgu.

As I afterwards learned, similar orders had been received by the French officers from their own Government, and so it became a question of which side could best restrain its soldiers. For it was quite patent to me that at any moment the law might be taken into their own hands by the numerous small detachments of Senegalese, who were dotted over the land, with a tricolour flag, but under no kind of European supervision. On our side, on the contrary, for many weeks I never allowed any party to occupy a Post without a British officer or non-commissioned officer in command, and it was only when I saw what a game of bluff was being played that we adopted similar methods; but by that time our men had learnt what was required, and could be trusted to do it.

Marching through uninhabited country, hitherto untraversed by Englishmen, Welch arrived at Kanikoko on the 2nd May, and halted, as he found the village in occupation of the French. I received a note from him at midnight, enclosing one from the European Sous Officier in command. It was an angry epistle, and warned me that I was breaking all rules of civilised countries by invading French territory in time of peace. He appealed to my common sense, and

suggested that my best course to avoid war between us was to return to the Niger and refer the matter to my Government.

Next day we advanced, and with Lieutenant Abadie, of the Royal Scots, who was acting as A.D.C., and fifteen men, I hurried on, leaving the Column to follow. We reached Kanikoko, twenty-two miles, before midday, and halted three hundred yards from the village, where, floating on a high staff, was the flag of France. The village was crowded with people, and we could distinguish soldiers with their rifles standing at the main entrance.

We branched off to the left towards our own camp, and by evening were all concentrated. Captain Welch, who was later on killed in South Africa, had, on arrival at Kanikoko, performed as cool a feat as any man could have done, and I am glad to record it here.

Being anxious to carry out his orders, he had walked to the village without any escort or guide, and by signal got into communication with the Senegalese non-commissioned officer of the guard. Signals were followed by words, and gradually he approached the Post and asked for a guide to show him the road to Kyama, where he knew there was a European officer. The non-commissioned officer, however, refused this, and Welch, without further ado, walked past the palisade and took the path which he felt sure, from the tracks, led to Kyama, and walking three miles through the forest, entered the large walled native town, and passing through it, arrived at the French fort. To understand thoroughly the danger of the proceeding one must have been in the country at the time. No man's life was then safe in Borgu; the natives had had a pretty sharp taste of European methods; the French themselves, of course, naturally hated our coming at all, and in addition their soldiers had distinct orders to prevent by force anyone entering their villages or forts. Notwithstanding all these facts, Welch had walked straight into Kyama without guide, escort, or knowledge of the road, and his action not only surprised the Frenchmen, but at once established the fact that we meant to go where we

pleased in a country in which we possessed an undoubted right of way. Welch was a quiet officer, who always did his duty conscientiously, and I was very pleased when he was gazetted a Brevet Major for his first year's work on the Niger.

The following day an advance party occupied a village only two miles from Kyama, and the remainder closed up, and thus the whole Force was again concentrated. I received a second letter, which pointed out that I had evidently forgotten the previous warning, and was endeavouring to seek the quarrel France was doing her best to avoid. In reply I merely said I was occupying villages which belonged to England, and was thereby carrying out the orders of my Government.

On the 5th May we had our first interview with a Frenchman, and it is worth relating. Written protests being of no avail, the Sous Officier himself came over to see me. He was preceded by an escort of twelve Senegalese soldiers and a tricolour flag. He was very smartly dressed, in striking contrast to our own rather worn khakee; clad in white jacket with a medal, blue zouave trousers, brown gaiters, white helmet with the badge of the Marines; he was carried in a hammock of scarlet cloth. As he approached I remember running into my tent and putting down the chin strap of my khakee helmet, as this appeared to give a smarter and more business-like finish to my somewhat sombre uniform.

Arrived at five paces from my tent, he drew himself up and saluted, and at the same time said, "Mon Colonel." We all returned the salute, and as his flag was raised, I turned towards it and again saluted. He did the same to the Union Jack. I noticed the Tricolour was held aloft, and I at once asked him to plant it near ours, and thus amidst the seeds of war, the two ensigns stood like brothers in arms.

Hardly had we exchanged words when another cavalcade appeared in sight; this time it was the King of Kyama with a big following; his town was in possession of the French,

and so he had come to proclaim aloud his friendship for France.

The King was a very fine specimen of an African chief; he looked a thorough soldier, and was reputed a great warrior in his country; his retinue were partly mounted, and the saddles and appointments were very showy. He took a seat on a cloth spread for him, and said he desired to explain matters to me. The Sous Officier assented, and he made a really very impressive address. He began by saying that some years previous to this he had met and made friends with a great white man, who had been to his country, but had made promises and then left, and he had heard no more of him. The white man, of course, was Lugard, and he seemed surprised when I interrupted him by saying that I had been sent by that same white man to his country, and that he was then only one hundred miles away. He proceeded to produce a small paper parcel, which after much unwinding of cotton contained a letter in Arabic, and the signature, as I had thought, was that of Captain Lugard.

I looked at and returned it. I had nothing to say. That the King had been placed in a very false position I knew before the interview; and that he had no other course open to him than to swear allegiance to France was patent.

Asked by his master if he desired to lose his friendship, he replied, "No; I love France." We then proceeded to discuss other matters. The French contention was that we had violated the laws of nations by forcing our way past their advanced armed posts, where the Tricolour plainly showed they were not English soil. This was the one argument advanced to all mine. It was of little use pointing out that the flag had no right to be there; that France was, in fact, in our country. No; the same reply always, "You have insulted our flag." At last I began to see it was of little use arguing, and I quoted two cases of violation of agreements, which even the Frenchman did not dispute; but he was not going to be done, and, rising from his seat, said, "The history of Borgu shows how England has overridden all treaties." I replied, "The history of Borgu

had surely yet to be written." He, however, put his hand in his haversack and produced a voluminous-looking manuscript document, which he informed me was the complete history of Borgu. I must own the whole performance was very amusing, and I could with difficulty desist from laughing; however, I quickly said it was a French version, and to the best of my knowledge had not yet been translated into English, so, of course, we were ignorant of it. He quite saw the fun of the thing, and we all laughed heartily.

Notwithstanding the strained relations that existed, and the many stormy interviews we had with the French in Borgu, none of us ever bore them any ill-feeling. On the contrary, off duty (so to speak) we were always good friends. We recognised that we were dealing with a brave and great people, and their Officiers and Sous-Officiers always treated us with that marked courtesy which is a national characteristic with them. Hence it came, as will be seen in these pages, that when our differences had once been settled we parted, I believe, the best of friends; which long may we continue to be so!

The Sous-Officier was a thorough gentleman, and in all his arguments I could not but admire his nice way of putting things; but, of course, this was no time for anything but business, and his position was untenable. He had again taken a seat, but rose and appealed to me as a "soldier" to say whether I had or had not insulted his flag by marching within fifty paces of his Post at Kanikoko. I assured him I had only passed so close to the place because the bush was so dense that I could not find my way by any other means. "But you refused to obey the orders of my Post-Commander at that place." I answered, "I have orders from my Government to occupy all places in this country where you have not a proper garrison, and I must obey them." The argument was getting rather heated, and he said to me, "Tell me plainly, have you orders from your Government to cut our lines of communications and occupy the towns and villages on these lines, remembering our two nations are at peace." I said that we did not recognise these towns and

villages as belonging to any Power but our own, and that I should continue to take possession of all such, unless I found them held by French soldiers, properly armed and equipped. He was on the point of again referring to his "History of Borgu," but I think he saw that game was of little practical use.

After many further points had been discussed, we smoked cigarettes and drank to each other's flags, and parted with due honours and salutes.

Shortly afterwards we shifted camp to a better site, and began the work of surveying the country and occupying every available village. I had a visit from the King of Kyama's son and a confidential messenger on the 7th May. They would not speak until I got them into my tent, and then I refused to listen to them, as they wanted to divulge a plan for seizing Kyama by a ruse. My conduct surprised them, and they asked me not to report it to the French. Before departing they drank a bottle of lavender water, which had been presented to me by the captain of the *Benin* on our outward voyage.

I quite puzzled "the heir to the throne" when he offered to send me news of the French regularly by saying that I always knew the French movements, and proceeded to ask him in which direction the town of Illo was situated; he pointed with his hand. I, of course, knew it was north, and I placed a large compass on the table, which swung north, and I said, "You see this compass will always point to Illo if I wish it." He, however, was rather sceptical, and asked what I should do if the French attacked me from some other direction. I said, "Well, name your direction," and he pointed to the west. I asked him to draw his sword, and telling him to imagine himself a Frenchman, I placed the broad-bladed weapon touching the compass; the needle at once turned, and both of them said, "You are a big white man, indeed. Yes, you are in truth from the Sironia" (the Great White Queen).

We returned the French officer's visit, but finding him away on duty, went on to call on the King of Kyama. His

private residence is surrounded by high walls, and appeared clean and comfortable. His numerous wives, ranging from old women to children, all assembled to do us honour. We were given stools in size proportioned to our rank, and the palaver was very interesting. We could not talk of the chief matter in hand, viz. the French, as I was particularly desirous of not offending their feelings. I had no hesitation in speaking plainly to their officers, but it is always judicious in Africa never to give the black man an idea that you seek his assistance against other white men, no matter to what race they may belong. Even with our soldiers, although we gave them to understand that we would fight if the French attempted to molest us in any way, we always spoke as if all they would have to do would be to fight the other black soldiers and avoided reference to their white commanders; and that the men thoroughly understood the position I am convinced. First must come the white man, to whatever race he may belong; and I never regretted our methods. After the chief and I had exchanged every kind of greeting and farewell wishes, in which were included riches, big families (which I did not appreciate, but was bound to agree to), sleep, drink, food, and victory, we departed amid the booming of war drums, etc.

Two days later, with an escort of two officers and thirty men, I started on a rapid march *viâ* Kishi, and along the boundary separating Lagos from Borgu, and finally through the French outposts back to Kyama. It was a most interesting move, and enabled me to grasp thoroughly the whole situation and locate the French Posts. The annual rains had set in, and the roads were all but impassable at times, but I gained a knowledge of the Hausas and Yorubas which stood me in right good stead two years later in Ashanti. It is mere truth to say that no other soldiers except these Africans could march in such countries under similar circumstances; their endurance is surprising, their cheerfulness beyond praise, and they seem to need neither food nor comforts, so long as their white officers will but lead the way.

Between Kyama and Kishi, a distance of some thirty-six miles, we passed several French Posts. The first night we camped near one of their occupied outposts, as we could find no other clear water; the Corporal at first objected, but hunger and thirst know no law, and so we sat down under the trees outside the enclosure and intimated that we intended stopping there. Very soon the good Corporal took pity on us and brought us water, and even food. It poured with rain all night, and we found it impossible to light a fire and boil water for tea. Next day we reached Kishi, where there was a wing of the West India Regiment.

On nearing the town, which is picturesquely situated at the foot of a hill, and has high tablelands on its east and north-east, I observed in a very unwholesome-looking hollow, by some running water, a Tricolour, with eight or ten soldiers on guard. They had been posted there after Kishi had been occupied by us, as before related, and as a protest against our action. I touched my hat to the emblem of a powerful nation for whom I had always had the highest regard, and passed on.

This was my first acquaintance with the West Indian soldiers; I had seen a few at Lagos, but only casually in the streets. They are burly, well-built men, with plenty of physical strength and endurance; but I am convinced you will never get their proper value out of them so long as they are treated in the same way as Europeans. It is astonishing how the system at present obtaining in these corps ever became established, and I feel sure many of their officers will agree with me. It is common sense to see that black men must have a code of their own.

We halted a day at Kishi, and I wandered many miles with a rifle. I saw several herds of antelope, but they were too wild to afford a shot; and, although I got nothing, it was most enjoyable being alone in the forest, with the chance of bagging a head.

On the 11th May we marched twenty-seven miles to a place called Bode, through an absolutely waterless forest. The heat was very trying, and we were glad to get into the

town. The next day's march brought us to a miserable village, where the inhabitants were one and all a mass of small-pox, and the water was so thick we could not pass it through even a Berkfeld filter. If you cannot get pure water with the aid of one of these portable pump-filters you may as well give it up altogether, for they are, in truth, the best friend an African traveller can have with him. Fortunately it came down in torrents about nine o'clock in the evening, and we filled our waterproof sheets, and after drinking our fill finished up with a glorious bath. At Okuta, our frontier station, we were well received, and glad to meet two white men, who were, as usual, most hospitable.

So far I had found our flag at every village, but on turning north-eastwards we began to pass through unoccupied farms and villages, in each of which I left a flag and a few men. At one village a most amusing incident took place. The head-man had shortly before our arrival done host to a party of French soldiers, who had evidently impressed him with the power of their masters. On my arrival I sent for him, but in reply received a message that he was a French subject, and could not obey my orders. I sent an officer to inquire if he possessed any flag or letter to prove his assertion, but he refused to take any notice of my message. I had neither time nor inclination to argue with this kind of petty chief, so I sent a small escort to fetch him. He arrived very shortly, and I ordered him to supply me with ten carriers, on payment to the next stage. I have often since thought that my promise to pay must have been the bitter pill he could not swallow; for he was firmly convinced that white men paid for nothing; however, be that as it may, he point-blank refused to furnish a single carrier. The village was then practically empty, nearly every man having fled on our approach, and none but old women could be seen. The advanced party had fallen in, and we only waited the ten carriers to make a start. Nothing is so likely to have the desired effect on such occasions as the force of personal example, so selecting a particularly uncomfortable load I ordered my recalcitrant chief to shoulder it himself to the

next camp ground; he demurred, but a couple of Hausas soon overcame his objections, and he found himself for once doing a day's honest work. Within ten minutes some fifteen carriers arrived, coming in from the bush on all sides of the village. I had thus not only got more than my number of men, but made the last-joined British subject chief carry his load some miles before letting him go. He afterwards turned out one of our best village head-men.

Continuing our march through the French line of outposts, and always marching round, but in sight of them, we arrived on the 17th May at Betikuta, a small place, but containing large herds of cattle and sheep. I had not been there many minutes before I saw that this petty village would soon become the most important in Borgu; for although Major Arnold had occupied it in my absence on the 10th instant, nevertheless the French had, during the night, sent a Sergeant and six men, and when day dawned our non-commissioned officer was surprised to find a tricolour flag within 400 yards of our own. He at once reported the fact and waited orders.

Now, I had throughout my march carefully avoided showing the Union Jack when actually camped near any French Post, and I had no intention of allowing them to show their flag. I therefore wrote to the French officer, who had only just arrived from Nikki or Dahomey to take command at Kyama. The letter explained what I have stated above, and as I knew it was of no use asking his reasons, which would be the same as usual, I informed him that unless his flag was removed within forty-eight hours I should advance towards Kyama and plant a Union Jack immediately outside the main gate of the town, at the same distance as his then was from Betikuta. There was no getting out of it this time; Betikuta was an insignificant village, whereas Kyama was at that time the capital of Borgu and the headquarters of the French in the country; moreover, at Kyama lived the King, and from his palace would be seen our flag within a few hundred yards—the one emblem the meaning of which every African then understood perfectly well. I had no

desire to bring on a fight, but I honestly own I now became convinced it was imminent.

During my absence Major Arnold had also occupied several places, most of them to the west of the French Posts, and placed small garrisons in each. These villages were naturally on the line of communication of the French, with their base at Nikki; but this was now unavoidable.

Lieutenant Glossop, 5th Dragoon Guards (since very severely wounded in South Africa), with an escort, was sent to reinforce one of these villages, called Temanji. On his way he came across a party of French soldiers who blocked his way; Glossop, with great judgment and self-restraint, passed round their flank, but not until our men and theirs had actually come into contact, and we had been obliged to force our way by shoving and pushing. Matters were fast coming to a head; when the soldiers of two nations get as far as this, it is only a matter of moments for the first shot to be fired, and had one rifle gone off in the *mêlée*, the whole frontiers, some hundreds of miles in length, would have been ablaze. The natives were longing for some such *dénoûment*, and our own officers and men, as well as the French, were at heart anxious to settle matters by an appeal to the sword rather than go on as we were then doing. But the orders of the Colonial Office were clear, and by these we must abide.

On his way back to Borgasi, which had now become our headquarters, Glossop was much surprised to find a French detachment, under command of two Europeans, drawn across his path, with bayonets fixed. Once again, instead of firing on them, which he would have been justified in doing, he made a slight *détour*, followed by the French, who, however, did not use force. The next day the selfsame two Frenchmen arrived in my camp to protest against our occupation of Temanji. As soon as they reached my tent they began a recital of our misdeeds. There was nothing to do but to listen politely, and when they had finished I asked why our officers had been met by them with fixed bayonets. The matter was fortunately happily settled.

Forty-eight hours would decide whether it was to be war or still the same strained relations, and we were all busy getting a fighting Column ready. Maxim practice and volley firing occupied most of the next day, and but a few hours remained, when I received a letter from the French Commandant at Kyama asking me to wait a reply to a reference he had made to his headquarters at Nikki. Unfortunately for us one of our officers had visited a French Post the previous day, and inadvertently mentioned the fact that we were about to place our flag near Kyama; this had been taken by them as an attempt to get the natives to help us, and they had protested. Taking all things, therefore, into consideration I agreed to their request, and deferred our move to Kyama for a week. Meantime I hurried down to Jebba, a distance of some ninety miles, saw Colonel Lugard, to whom I reported everything and received fresh instructions, and moving by treble marches I was back in Borgasi in plenty of time.

The same day I received a letter from the Chief French Resident in Borgu, and Commander of the Forces in Haut Dahomey; a portion of it will show the bitter feeling that was fast growing up between us. Not only was I personally reproached as an unauthorised "invader" of French soil, but my evil deeds of every kind were shortly to raise a "cry of horror throughout the land." I was formally called on to evacuate the territory I had violated, and finally informed that the relations between us in future could only be those laid down in the *Service en Campagne*.

I acknowledged the receipt of this, and enclosed a copy of both the above and despatched them to the Governor of Dahomey, asking him to take such action as he deemed proper to curb his officers in their official correspondence. I must own the Governor took up the matter and censured his subordinate.

And now at last only a few hours remained before the final act of the drama was to be enacted. If the French attempted to resist my placing the flag outside the main gate of Kyama, there could be no other result than a fight, and

that meant war between us in West Africa, and where else it was not for me to say. We only knew that the relations at home were exceedingly strained over the Niger question, but our own duty lay in Borgu alone. My own conviction was that it would end in a fight, as the French officer in command had told me that our attempting it would mean war. Moreover, owing to the delay in carrying out our intentions, he had had time to increase the garrison of the fort very considerably, and the natives reported that a Field-gun had also arrived. I asked the French officer no question about this; he had asked for time to refer to his superior—he had been given it; and had perhaps wisely utilised it in bringing up reinforcements; all is fair in war, or in what might any day turn into such; I do not blame him.

All routes to our camp had been closed for two days past, and we saw no inhabitants, which looked like business. On the morning of the 30th May, Major Arnold, with a company of infantry, started for Kyama. Our camp was well protected by this time, although, having no entrenching tools, we had found it very difficult to erect a palisade and dig a trench round it. Here, however, came in the good points of the West African soldier; penknives, spoons, brass pots, sharpened bits of wood, anything and everything that could dig a hole or shovel up earth was brought into play, and the result was extraordinary. Within a few days a small, rough fort had been erected, sufficient to save any sudden rush on our treasure, ammunition, etc., and at the same time grass and wood shelters had been made for the men and horses. With proper tools all this would, of course, have been nothing, but under the conditions in which we worked it was surprising. During all this time it rained in torrents, and most of the men had only one suit of clothing and one blanket.

On Arnold's departure for Kyama I went round the camp, talking to men and officers; I tried to appear as if nothing extraordinary was taking place, but at heart I have seldom spent a more anxious hour. I paraded the Reserve, which was under my immediate orders, and was to proceed post-

haste on news from Arnold that he was likely to be opposed. The distance to Kyama was under two miles, and I had purposely not followed him, as the French had spies round our camp, and the news of a big Column advancing might have at once precipitated an action. When everything was ready, including two ·303 Maxims, I let the men sit or lie down in their places in extended ranks, and taking a note-book proceeded to write. In truth, however, I did no writing, but was listening intently to catch the sound which I believed every moment might boom through the open forest, or see the messenger coming post-haste from Arnold asking for assistance. Half an hour passed, which appeared to me to be ages; perhaps my own imagination painted matters larger than they really were; but at any rate I felt sure, and I have since found that far greater authorities than myself felt sure also, that this morning would decide a big question. Even unheard-of villages in remote African jungles have suddenly loomed up large before the world when bullets and powder have sounded the knell of peace.

At last a messenger came into sight and brought me a note. Arnold had planted our flag, fixed a site for our guard, which was to remain there in charge, and made a clearance for huts, etc. This ended an eventful day, and one that I often live again.

This is the story. Arnold found as he approached Kyama that any natives in sight immediately fled towards the town; he also noticed two or three extra Tricolours near the walls and one over the King's house, none of which had been there before. On Arnold's nearing the main gate a guard fell in and stood to its arms; sentries were also posted in the trees. Everything boded a fight. When within the named distance our men halted, and the French officer advanced and exchanged salutes with ours; he protested against our action, but said that as it was only in retaliation for what he had done at Betikuta he would offer no resistance. Of course, it was only a protest on our part, and I had said so, but the moral victory was the greatest we could have won at that time.

And now fate, as if determined to have given us every opportunity of a fight without interference, stepped in and brought the news that an agreement was on the verge of settlement in Paris between the two Governments. We had no sort of news ourselves, but two hours after the occurrences I have just related had taken place, the French officer at Kyama received an urgent message from the Governor of Dahomey, informing him that from a Havas telegram it appeared the Convention had practically been concluded; he added that by this agreement France would evacuate Borgu and Boussa on the Niger.

I have since seen it stated semi-officially that it was this news alone which prevented the French from resisting our move on Kyama; but this is not the case; it was after, and not before the incident of the flag, that they received the telegram sent by special mounted messengers, and in proof of this I have the French officer's original letters now in my possession. In any case, it was not for a long time afterwards that I received any news from our own Government of the result of the Convention, and until I did I continued to act just as if no agreement had been come to. I had no reason to doubt the French telegram, but it was not safe, when face to face with the troops of another Power, to take anything for granted until I had actual and specific information to go on. The message from the Governor of Dahomey was significant of the tension between our forces, for he added he hoped it might arrive in time to avert the "imminent conflict" before Kyama. It did not arrive in time, but the conflict, nevertheless, was averted.

At the same time I received a letter from the Officer Commanding at Nikki, in which he remarked that this news cut the ground from under my feet, and hence there was no longer any necessity for me to continue my advance. I did not quite follow his argument, as it appeared to me, on the contrary, to be no longer necessary for him to attempt preventing our occupying our own legitimate territories. The crisis was past, but our troubles were by no means over, as I shall endeavour to explain in the next chapter. How

often, during those three months, did I not have cause to admire the saving common sense with which our officers are endowed, if they are but appealed to to exercise it; and I entirely ceased to wonder why it is that of all nations we are the most successful, not only in adding to our Empire, but in welding it to ourselves, so that the only traducers of our fair name are to be found amongst those Little Englanders who seldom leave our islands, and whom an educated native of West Africa once described to me as the "English niggers."

CHAPTER XIV

1898

BORGU AND ILLORIN—A CRITICAL MOMENT—SIGNATURE OF THE NIGER CONVENTION—PUNITIVE EXPEDITIONS—THE FRENCH IN WEST AFRICA

NOTWITHSTANDING the "Havas" telegram, which had stated that a settlement of the Niger difficulties was on the point of signature, small parties of French soldiers wandered about the country, entering our villages on pretence of losing their way, and purloining poultry, etc. On one occasion I sent an officer and a few men with distinct orders to fire on any such men. This they nearly succeeded in doing; but the looters had fled just before their arrival. I called on the French officer in Kyama, and found a strong garrison, consisting of Senegalese, Tirailleurs, and Gardes Indigènes—a very different lot to what I had seen on previous visits.

Whilst talking in his hut "Retreat" sounded, and I witnessed a very pretty sight; the whole garrison at once fell in in front of their shelters; the officers saluted, and, of course, we did the same, whilst the Drapeau was very slowly lowered. It impressed our men very much, and so it did me; I took a hint, and ever afterwards when the Jack was raised and lowered, any men in the vicinity always stood to attention and saluted. The French had many excellent customs, all tending to prove their martial instincts, and I never failed to take a note of all such as I plainly saw smartened up our men and gave them an extra respect for the Flag.

The 5th of June was very nearly my last day in this world. I had received a summons from Colonel Lugard to proceed to Fort Goldie, a distance of fifty-five miles, and meet him there, to discuss certain details. Captain Charles Crutchley, of my own British battalion, was acting as A.D.C., and with only six men we started on our journey. Not for a moment dreaming of any interference between Borgasi and the Niger, I had sent on ahead three hundred cattle belonging to Kyama, which the owners had implored me to take under my protection till the country was settled; there were also some fifty men, women, and children, including some escaped slaves of the King's, and in charge of all was a guard of eighteen men of the Royal Niger Constabulary, under a native Sergeant. On passing Kanikoko this non-commissioned officer was stopped by the small French garrison there, and told he could proceed no further, as they had orders to prevent cattle being removed from Borgu. Our N.C.O., however, was an old soldier, and threatened to fire if any cattle were stopped, and it ended in their all getting past.

I arrived an hour after near the village, and found ten or fifteen cows being driven into the small fort; the owner was uttering piteous cries, and so leaving the six men of the escort on the path, Crutchley and I rode to the gate to interview the non-commissioned officer; our revolvers were in our holsters, and we were in shirt-sleeves. The N.C.O. had just left for Kyama, but I got into conversation with the senior soldier, who spoke French well. Before I could ask him a question he made a signal which brought the guard to the entrance; another command, and they had all loaded, and stood at the ready at six yards' distance from us. I could look down the barrels of their rifles, and I must own I felt a cold shiver run down my back, for this looked like real business. However, mustering up my courage, I ordered them to unload, and casting a glance at Crutchley, I suggested we should stand quite still. The Senegalese made no signs of moving, and after threatening them with dire punishment from their own officers for this breach of

customs, we slowly rode away. I never felt so small, nor did I ever feel more relieved than when we found ourselves back with our own small escort. The cattle were released, and later on the N.C.O., who had gone to ask for reinforcements from Kyama, deserted and joined our forces, and was commonly known as the man who could lift the heaviest weights in the country. He had certainly been the cause of placing a heavy weight on me that morning, and indirectly of helping to lift it again.

After interviewing Lugard at Bajibo and receiving his orders, which I cannot repeat, but which, in case of the non-ratification of the Convention then sitting at Paris, were such as would finally decide the long drawn out question of ownership by sterner methods than those heretofore employed, Crutchley and I started on our return journey of fifty-five miles to Kyama through the now familiar forests.

Borgu was, at the time I am writing of, to us an almost unknown land; for fifty-five miles, from the Niger almost due west to Kyama, you passed through entirely uninhabited country. The first and only village on this route was Kanikoko, fifty miles from the river. The innumerable tracks of game of all kinds gave promise of good times for future sportsmen, but the difficulty of finding drinking-water made the marches very trying. The silence of the bush was very remarkable; at Jebba, only thirty miles lower down the Niger, birds were plentiful, but seldom a note did one hear in this deserted land. The ugly shea butter tree and various kinds of scrub made up the foliage, and now that the annual fires had cleared the grass jungle there was little undergrowth. Here and there are open marshy reaches without trees of any sort, and occasionally you passed massive rocky hillocks; but the scenery as a whole was decidedly uninteresting, and as a French officer said to me one day, "What on earth are we fighting about? I should personally be very glad never to see this hole again."

My escort had been augmented by another eighty men from Jebba, under Sergeant Mackenzie, of the Seaforth

Highlanders, one of the best of soldiers, and who within two years of this time had won the medal for distinguished conduct in the field, the Victoria Cross, and a commission in the Black Watch. The chief feature in the column, however, was the presence of four bluejackets from H.M.S. *Heron*, who were very kindly placed at my disposal by Commander Melville, and were all mounted. They were not only a small tower of strength in themselves, but they afforded us the very greatest amusement on the line of march. Not being horsemen, they naturally applied all their naval terms in describing or directing their steeds; every part of the horse was soon named after some corresponding portion of a ship; and it was a constant source of laughter to hear their remarks and ideas on this novel mode of locomotion. The very first day, soon after they had mounted, I was riding on in front, when suddenly I heard a scrimmage, and looking round, found soldiers and carriers all fleeing in every direction and clearing the path; up this, in John Gilpin fashion, came tearing a pony with a bluejacket lying on his face, his arms round the animal's neck and his body all over to the "port side." He passed me at lightning speed, and held on for another thirty yards, when over went pony, rider, and all "in one *rude* burial blent." Of course he was not hurt, though the pony was, and he got up and laughed as much as any of us.

On the 18th June—Waterloo Day—we had a gymkhana meeting and sports for the men. Even with the aid of our bluejackets we could not avert defeat in the tug-of-war—"White Men versus Black"—and the soldiers were immensely pleased. The truth is that Europeans in West Africa lose much of their stamina, and most of us had suffered a great deal from fever, whilst the natives were very fit and burly fellows.

Definite news at last reached us that the Niger Convention had been signed, and that a Boundary Commission would assemble the following season to demarcate our frontiers. Nothing, therefore, remained to be done except to take over Posts and towns then in possession of the French throughout

Borgu, and to allow the people to return and rebuild their many villages which had been destroyed.

The King of Kyama was, of course, the first to be got hold of, but he was overcome by the sudden change of rulers, and fearing we might punish him for his public avowal of friendship with France, he cut the Gordian knot of his difficulties by bolting with his wives into the forest. This was followed by the clearance out of his house and grounds of anything of value by the Senegalese, who, finding the place empty, naturally laid hands on it, and when I visited Kyama two days later, this portion of the town was altogether deserted. Within forty-eight hours, however, the King arrived in our camp, and I was awakened at midnight by the sentry telling me he was waiting to see me. He was in an abject fright, and had with him two or three of his wives and head-men.

It was sad to see this really fine Chief in such a position; but as he explained to me, he could not tell who would eventually own his country, and he was between the devil and the deep sea. I reassured him, and offered him refreshments, which he partook of, and he was given a house in the village till such time as the French evacuated his town. Next morning a French officer called on me, and, as usual, was preceded by a Tricolour; the silly King saw this, and came to the conclusion that after all the two white races had arranged his downfall in combination; he left his house and slipped into the jungle once more, where I left him to his own devices. Later on he once again appeared, and dismounting from his horse, fell on his knees and asked for forgiveness. How, indeed, had the mighty fallen; I raised him and offered him a seat, and from that hour his really kingly dignity returned, and we became good friends.

On the 28th June the French withdrew all their outlying outposts, and on the 29th finally evacuated Kyama. In order, once more, not to give the natives a chance of thinking our rivals had been driven out by force, which they certainly would have concluded, I purposely delayed occupying their Fort until two hours after they had left.

Within a few days we had moved troops to all the abandoned Posts, including Boussa, on the Niger, and shortly afterwards a Column left to occupy Illo, on the upper northern Niger, which was to be our extreme frontier in that direction. And thus was Borgu lost and won.

Before returning to Jebba to rejoin Lugard I availed myself of the opportunity of getting a few days' shooting to the south-west of Kyama. These forests abound in antelope, and there must be a goodly number of bush-cow, the West African buffalo. I spent some days in wandering about, but, as usual, unless you know the country and the habits of the animals, or have really good local trackers and shikarees, you can get but little game. I possessed none of these requisites, and yet I came on several herds of roan and other antelope, and frequently saw single animals, or started them in hollows and high grass. The whole country was literally trodden by antelope of different sorts, and although I only bagged three or four heads, it was well worth the hard day's work, especially when you knew you were the first white man who had ever shot there.

Shooting in this part of Africa was very weird. The local people knew nothing of Europeans, and simply stared at you if you entered a village. They had an idea you intended burning the village and carrying off the women. Consequently it was hopeless to expect any information out of them regarding the shooting. Near one village I had seen so many footprints that I determined to get hold of a man and take him with me, and in order to soothe his mother I gave her a shilling—the first she had ever seen.

But the old lady would not let him come with me unless I took her also. It was a poor way of finding sport, but still on the recommendation of my hunter, I agreed, and we started. First went my boy tracker, then I followed, and immediately behind me went the ugly old witch. Very soon we found a hartebeeste, and I got a shot; as I fired I heard a shout from the old woman, and it turned out she was yelling to her son to make a bolt of it; this he was not long

in doing, and was presently in full career over the open plain, and I told the wretched mother she might go too, which she did; but not before she had returned me my shilling, with the remark that she had no desire to bring the wrath of the gods on her village by keeping a juju of that kind anywhere near it. I wonder what my friend would say to-day if anyone offered her a shilling; she has probably learnt a good many things since those days.

I find noted in the margin of my "Staff Diary" against 16th July, 1898—"Had a present of a pound of American cheese. What greedy creatures we are."

"Jebba once more; what an awful spot this is!" is another entry against 23rd July, and about this time we had reason to think so, for death had been busy on the Niger. Officers and British non-commissioned officers had been paying a heavy toll for the price of Empire in remote lands. Both at Jebba and Lokoja there had been much sickness, and the gunboats *Heron* and *Jackdaw* had lost one of their Commanders, Bellairs, and a surgeon, Dr. Barter. Of the West African Frontier Force numbers had died or been invalided, and black-water fever, that insidious African disease, was playing havoc with the white man. How different it was the second year of our stay in Nigeria; medical science had by that time discovered a treatment; and this, combined with facilities of invaliding, reduced the death roll to an almost normal one for tropical countries.

It was during these trying times that we all learnt to appreciate thoroughly the valuable services rendered by the three Nursing Sisters attached to the Medical department—Miss Sarah Clarke, Miss Minnie Powell, and Sister Mary Nutt. They had been sent out by the Colonial Office at Lugard's suggestion, and were the first English women who ever got as far as Jebba. Everything that was then possible had been done for their comfort, but, withal, they had of necessity to endure a great many privations; these they bore cheerfully enough, for they were well aware that everybody was keen to make their work as pleasant as the conditions would permit of; their patience and energy

in that trying climate were remarkable, and at the close of their first tour of service, on Mr. Chamberlain's recommendation, Her Majesty was pleased to confer on them the decoration of the Royal Red Cross.

Writing of the Sisters brings to mind an interesting incident. I noticed that the sentries at Jebba invariably presented arms to them, and one day I asked the sergeant of the guard why they did so; his reply was to the point, and translated into English runs as follows: "We notice that whereas every British officer first touches his cap to you, you yourself always first either touch your cap or take off your hat to the Sisters, so we have come to the conclusion that they are bigger than you"; and then added, "We know that the Great White Queen is greater than everything." I said nothing and passed on; and the sentries continued to salute the Sisters as long as I was in Nigeria.

Meanwhile we had time to look round and take stock of what had been accomplished on the Niger.

We had left Jebba a barren, hideous island; we returned to find that the energy of our Commissioner, Colonel Lugard, backed by the unswerving devotion to duty of Lieutenant R. L. McClintock, Royal Engineers, was fast transforming it into a habitable spot. Houses were springing up in every direction; drill grounds had replaced marshes; hospitals were located where all had been rock and scrub. Our popular P.M.O., the late Dr. Poole, was here, there, and everywhere, and little then dreamed that two years later he would find himself besieged with the Legations in Pekin, at the other end of the earth; from Jebba to the "Forbidden City" is a long cry.

Whilst waiting at Fort Goldie arranging for a Column to start north for Illo, one of those unpremeditated cases of combined insubordination, which originate in a trifle, but frequently end very seriously, took place amongst the troops of the Royal Niger Company. Owing to the evacuation of Borgu by the French it became necessary to occupy our outlying Posts; and the only available trained soldiers were the Company's Constabulary. Many of these had already served

in the expedition to Argungu; they had next been detained during the crisis in Borgu; and now, instead of being allowed to return to their headquarters at Lokoja, they found themselves bound north for Illo and other up-river stations. That there was much discontent I was well aware, and this was increased when some of the West African Frontier Force officers were attached to them for duty, in place of their own who had been invalided or ordered to headquarters at Lokoja.

On the afternoon of the 16th July rations were being issued on parade, and owing to the non-arrival of some canoes laden with rice, half the ration was being issued in cloth, at that time a substitute for money. The men, who were not in a good temper, refused to accept the cloth, and the officer commanding the parade proceeded to explain matters to them; but the African is a regular child in such matters. The same men who had marched for months cheerfully and without complaint now suddenly got out of hand, shouted, hesitated, and then broke the ranks and rushed towards the quarter guard, where their arms were stored. Hearing the uproar I left my tent, and on my way to the parade ground met two very excited young officers, who called out, "The Constabulary have mutinied and rushed to their arm store." Within a quarter of an hour they had all been mustered once more, and the ringleaders were flogged in the presence of the parade, and the whole lot quietly took their rations and dispersed.

Such occurrences in West Africa cannot be called mutiny in any true sense. There have been cases of premeditated insubordination by batches of men, but these are very rare, and the general danger lies in hesitating to punish immediately by the severest methods those who throw over discipline in any way, even for a moment. At Jebba, long after this, a similar case occurred in the Frontier Force; it had assumed a more serious form, however, before the men could be got together again. On this occasion, notwithstanding that I immediately personally reduced the worst of the non-commissioned officers and severely punished all the ring-

leaders, still the men refused their rations, which they only objected to on the ground that guinea corn had been issued in lieu of rice. They carried off and destroyed some of the corn, but eventually fell in on parade, and were ordered to file past, each man to receive his share and again fall in. Standing by the bags were two British non-commissioned officers with loaded carbines, and orders to shoot immediately the first man who hesitated. They all knew full well what it meant to disobey, and they marched away cheering their officers. There was no case of combined bad conduct in that battalion again during the time I was on the Niger.

I will only mention one more instance of this class of foolishness on the part of these otherwise good soldiers, and it will go to prove that promptitude is far better than formality in settling disciplinary matters amongst black troops. The men had an idiotic habit of sometimes resenting the punishment of their comrades by assembling near the quarter guard and asking that they also might be considered as prisoners and punished with them. They would refuse to leave until the arrival of a British officer. It was nothing more than their foolish way of expressing their sympathy with one of their own people, and it must be said that they never adopted this system of asking for justice unless there was some ground for believing their comrade had been, perhaps, punished on untrustworthy evidence.

These occurrences will gradually die out as the men realise that discipline cannot brook such conduct on their part. However, in the case I am referring to, a number of men of the Royal Niger Constabulary, who had been left to garrison Kyama, in Borgu, became very insubordinate and refused to obey orders. Captain Welch, of the Hampshire Regiment, was in command at the time, and as he could not bring the men to reason he confined them in a house in the Fort. From this they attempted to escape in a body in order to get their arms; Welch had only a few of the newly raised Frontier Force to depend on, and it was very important that the others should not escape, as there was at that time some very natural ill feeling between the

Company's and the Imperial troops, who had suddenly invaded the country, and were far better armed and clothed, both of which things caused much jealousy in the older Force.

The Constabulary could not abide the idea of being under a guard of our men, and the ringleader of the gang determined to rush the sentry; but although the sentry was a recruit, near him stood a British non-commissioned officer with a loaded carbine. Nothing daunted, the Hausa dashed out of the door, calling to his comrades to follow; he fell, shot dead, and the trouble was at an end. The prisoners were sent down to the Niger under an escort of only six of the West African Frontier Force recruits, and the prompt punishment of one man thus saved what might have developed into a serious business, especially in a country only just occupied by our troops, and where mutinous soldiers with arms might have done much mischief.

At Jebba was quartered the 2nd Battalion of the West African Frontier Force, commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel Fitzgerald (now commanding the 1st Battalion Durham Light Infantry); we had served together in Kabul twenty years previously, and as there were many officers of Indian experience in the battalion and also in the Artillery, India was naturally often discussed and compared with our present quarters. Captain Booth, of the Northumberland Fusiliers, was Adjutant, and when, shortly afterwards, he became Brigade Major, was succeeded by Captain the Honourable R. Somerset, of the Grenadier Guards. The battalion was fortunate in having two such Adjutants in succession, for Somerset lived for his work, and slaved incessantly to bring his men to perfection; in fact, as he used to say, "My black Grenadiers will soon make me forget I am not still with the Guards." His name amongst the soldiers was "Oli Shango," the god of thunder; presumably, he thought, because he swore at them so. With his restless energy he started a cattle and poultry farm on the island, and often after parade, where he was always a noticeable figure, being the smartest and best-looking man

in the place, he might be seen in shirt-sleeves feeding his sheep and fowls, counting the eggs, etc., all of which he looked on as a duty, and which he knew meant health to his white comrades. Men of this stamp are not to be found every day; and, withal, he was the most modest of soldiers and best of companions.

Whilst we had been carrying out our task in Borgu the Frontier Force had taken part in various expeditions. During May, Major Reade, Shropshire Light Infantry, second in command of the 1st Battalion (now Commandant of the Royal Military College, Kingston, Canada), with other officers, had been employed in Anam, south of Lokoja, and the men were reported to have behaved well. Reade was a most reliable officer, and later on served with the Headquarter Staff, where his knowledge of Staff duties proved most useful. In August an expedition consisting of four hundred men, including sixty of the Royal Niger Constabulary, with one 9-pounder and three 7-pounder guns and three Maxims, under command of Lieutenant-Colonel Pilcher, proceeded up the Niger from Lokoja to punish the Emirs of Lapai and Argayeh, who had been slave-raiding and destroying towns and villages right down to the river's banks. The Column after effecting a landing marched rapidly and completely surprised the enemy, consisting of six hundred horse and three thousand footmen; their stronghold was destroyed and many of them killed and wounded. It is pleasant to reflect that it was Colonel Pilcher who later, in a far more difficult field in South Africa, again using his surprise tactics, captured a complete rebel laager, at a time when our fortunes were very low. In fact, his was one of the first of the long series of successes which about that time came as balm to our country. During this expedition Captain Goldie-Taubman died from the effects of climate and disease.

The 2nd Battalion, which had its headquarters at Jebba, had not been idle. In connection with the insubordination of a detachment at Kyama, which has already been described, a company of this corps, under command of Captain

Fremantle, Coldstream Guards, had performed a most creditable feat. At two hours' notice, on a dark night, they crossed the Niger and struck across country, with the object of reaching Fort Goldie, a distance of twenty-six miles. This move had been necessitated by the fact that men of the Constabulary were then quartered at Fort Goldie, and it was desirable to have a stronger force in case of any attempt to sympathise with the prisoners then on their way down from Kyama. On reaching the first of two rivers which had to be crossed it was found that there were no canoes on the near bank; and it would have been impossible to cross without. But such details do not stop British officers: Lieutenant Buxton, of the Norfolk Regiment, immediately swam across and brought back sufficient to make a start with, and soon ponies and men were all over. The same process was again repeated at a second river, and the company arrived at Fort Goldie, having once more to ferry over the Niger at midday. They had covered twenty-six miles in twelve hours, including the crossing and their long delays. Buxton afterwards went to South Africa, where, I have no doubt, he found scope for the fearless daring which prompted him to swim dangerous tropical rivers, which harbour crocodiles, on a pitch-dark night.

A sad affair took place on the 9th of October on the upper Niger. Lieutenant Keating and Corporal Gale (both belonging to my own British regiment) were quartered at Yauri, well to the north of Boussa, and being unable to procure canoes for a journey up river, proceeded to the island of Hela to interview the head-man. They had with them fifteen soldiers of the 1st Battalion. The people of Hela refused to assist them with canoes. What followed exactly will never be known, but the party was suddenly assailed on all sides by the natives and found itself surrounded.

With admirable coolness Keating and Gale returned towards the river bank; the latter was severely wounded and placed in one of the canoes, the remainder of the unwounded men fought until their ammunition was ex-

pended. Apparently only fifteen rounds a man had been taken out—the old, foolish mistake which has often cost us dear all over the Empire. Nothing remained but to take to the canoes; but the Hela chief was anxious personally to meet the white man; he did, and paid for it with his life, for Keating had the satisfaction of killing him before he was himself overpowered. Only two men lived to tell the tale, and both were severely wounded. Keating was a Canadian, and a tablet erected by his father is now placed on the banks of the far-off Niger to mark the grave of a gallant son of the Empire.

Swift retribution followed Keating's death; two small columns, under Captain Fremantle and Captain Gillespie, of the South Wales Borderers, with Lieutenant Brodie, Seaforth Highlanders, attacked and destroyed Hela. The natives, evidently above themselves with their past success, resisted the landings, and lost fifty men killed; but this was not the end of their punishment, for many who had actually been present at the fight were subsequently captured by Major Morland, 60th Rifles, Commandant in Eastern Borgu.

But long before these events took place a change had come over the force, for Colonel Lugard had been summoned to England to confer with the Colonial Office regarding the terms of transfer of the possessions and troops of the Royal Niger Company to the Crown, and on the 29th August, 1898, I had found myself Her Majesty's Acting Commissioner and Commandant in Nigeria. It was a splendid charge, and one any man would have been glad to get, and I had the immense advantage of Lugard's experience to guide me for some months. From this date till 1st January, 1900, I continued to act for Lugard, who then returned to take up his new appointment as High Commissioner of Northern Nigeria, including all the territories of the Company, which then ceased to exist in its old form, and became a trading Company pure and simple.

It was not long after Lugard's departure that political troubles with the important State of Illorin began. At the end of September I received a telegram from the Governor

of Lagos informing me that the Emir had been demanding allegiance from certain towns under the protection of that Government. A letter was at once sent by me to the Emir asking for an explanation, but he refused to open it, and the escort which conveyed it was hustled out of the town. Such conduct could not be allowed, but as Illorin was then still under the Company's jurisdiction I was unable to demand satisfaction except through the Agent-General. At the same time, therefore, as he was informed of events, I sent fifty men and an officer and two British non-commissioned officers, all under command of Captain Somerset, direct to Illorin, to ask for an explanation of the Emir's conduct in refusing my letter. It is a long story, but shortly this is what occurred. Somerset was received, but that was all; the Emir still sent no reply; and a mobile Column was got ready to start to his assistance. Protracted correspondence took place both with the home authorities by telegram and with the Company. This resulted in the Acting Agent-General eventually visiting Illorin and interviewing the Emir. Meantime Captain Somerset, with the zeal and energy for which he was so remarkable, had done all a man could do to bring the Emir to his senses; but neither he nor I then knew that the Niger Company was determined not to do anything likely to require military force, no matter what the Emir might or might not himself do. Under the circumstances, as my orders were to leave matters in the Company's hands, we could only wait.

Somerset, in a most interesting private diary he has left, has well described his feelings during the many weeks he was detained at Illorin; they exactly coincide with my own, and it was matter of bitter regret to me that an officer so high-spirited, manly, and loyal should have been placed in so demeaning a position. He had his Post fortified and cleared for action; everything was done with regularity, and his non-commissioned officers and men were ready to do his smallest bidding with joy. One message by the wire, which was then finished between Jebba and Illorin, and with his fifty men he could easily have settled the city

and its Chief. But it was not to be; notwithstanding that during his stay there many of his carriers and followers were severely wounded by the Emir's people near the town, and that he had to put up with many insults and annoyances, he remained inactive in accordance with his orders; and at last, with the arrival of the Acting Agent-General of the Company, received a most meagre apology from the Emir, who himself did not attend the Durbar under plea of illness; and with the apology came a fine of a couple of old broken-down horses and some money, which was paid by the Company.

Somerset had had a very bad time; overworked, underfed, and living most uncomfortably; up half the night, and with regular attacks of fever, he contracted the germs of the disease which ended his life only three days after he landed in England on sick leave.

> "We doubt not that for one so true
> There must be other nobler work to do."

News of complications with France reached us frequently during October and November, and we had orders to be prepared to advance beyond our own territories, in case of the non-ratification of the Niger Convention. Preparations of every kind were made; a thousand carriers, enlisted at my request in Lagos by the Governor's orders, were marched direct to Jebba. Had it come to a matter of fighting, we were infinitely better prepared for it than during the early days in Borgu, and our three Batteries of Artillery were by this time fit to take the Field, as well as a small troop of Mounted Infantry.

Early in December Major Morland led two most successful expeditions against the Chiefs of Zagga, on the far north of our Niger boundary, and not only brought them speedily to book, but secured several men of those who had taken part against Lieutenant Keating's escort. Other expeditions below Lokoja, carried out by the Niger Company, were augmented by men from our 1st Battalion, and so uniformly well did both battalions behave on these occasions that

it soon became apparent that the labours of our officers and British non-commissioned officers were bearing excellent fruit. It was to us, one and all, a great satisfaction to find that a Force so recently raised, and recruited in part from races which had hitherto not borne a great name for fighting, was able not only to hold its own with the old Niger Constabulary, but from its superior equipment and far greater European supervision was in fact the better trained and more reliable of the two.

The Hausa and the Yoruba had each been given a fair trial, and the opinions of Commanding Officers of corps was much the same, viz. that each in his own way would make a first-class soldier, and that a combination of both was the best form of fighting unit for West Africa.

At the risk of repeating the same thing over again, I would say that it is not so much the race that makes the difference in the quality of corps, as the officers who are placed in command, from Colonel to Subaltern. Take any class of men, either on the Niger or in any other part of the Empire; give them the best officers, equal chances of service with others living in the same countries, do not let them believe for a moment you distrust them as fighting men, and you will assuredly weld them into material which may be depended on in the hours of stress. On the other hand, given even the best material; officer it with ne'er-do-weels or inferior men, and it will soon degenerate and become useless. Therefore, for a country like West Africa, where every white man must be a tower of strength in himself, above all things send only selected officers and British non-commissioned officers, and get rid of the slothful and easy-going, or a day may come when possibly by themselves, possibly assisted by others, the black races may think they see a day of independence dawning. A vain hope truly, but one that may cost dear to dissipate.

For my share in the operations in Borgu I had the great honour of receiving "the special thanks" of Her Majesty's Government, conveyed to me through Colonel Lugard by the Secretary of State for the Colonies. In addition I re-

ceived a very kind letter from Mr. Chamberlain himself, informing me that Her Majesty had been pleased to appoint me a Companion of the Order of St. Michael and St. George.

The Convention between Great Britain and France for the delimitation of their respective possessions to the west of the Niger, and of their respective possessions and "spheres of influence" to the east of that river, was signed at Paris on the 14th June, 1898; but the ratifications were not to be exchanged until six months, "or sooner if possible." Owing to various causes, the ratifications were not exchanged within the time named, and consequently a protocol prolonging the period another six months was signed at Paris on the 8th December, 1898. From this it is evident that it was for a long time by no means certain that ratification would take place, and hence our orders to be ready for all eventualities.

The terms of the Convention secured for Great Britain practically all Borgu, and with it the important Posts of Boussa and Illo; in fact it secured for us far more than we deserved. For years past, whilst France was straining every nerve to get a footing on the upper Niger, we had been content to let matters slide, and it was only when their encroachments became such as to threaten seriously our whole position that the Royal Niger Company was assigned its proper place in West Africa, and the Imperial Government stepped in. The Company had been a great trading concern; its operations extended over vast areas, but its motto had never been "effective occupation." On the contrary, with about one thousand poorly armed soldiers it claimed to possess jurisdiction over countries in which we now find it necessary to keep three thousand men, armed with the most recent weapons and field-guns. Where the Imperial Government employs ten Europeans, the Company did their work somehow with one.

Contentment did not prevail amongst the Company's employees. They had toiled in darkness, but when the fierce light of a vigorous Colonial Office shone on them, in the shape

of others of their own countrymen who arrived all of a sudden, with good pay and good leave rules to nerve them for the battle of life on the Niger, then for the first time those who had lived in the bliss of ignorance woke to find how meagre was their own lot in comparison with that of the new arrivals. I have no desire to rake up facts which were there patent to all; but in writing of the causes which created the tension on the Niger at the end of 1897, it is impossible to explain matters without stating the reasons which partly led to it.

Probably those in whose hands rested the destinies of the Company foresaw that, like many of their predecessors, both in Africa and elsewhere, the day must come when their charter would be revoked; and seeing this, they may have made up their minds to let it come as speedily as possible; but unless this was the case, it is impossible to see how they could have expected to carry on their duties as a great administrative as well as a trading concern, with the very small number of soldiers and European officials they employed. At no time had France a thousand men available to employ in operations against the Company, and even this number was spread over hundreds of miles of frontiers; but the Company, on the other hand, never had a hundred men whom they could, without reducing other garrisons, have spared to oppose them.

The British officers attached to the force were, taken all round, as hard working a lot as I have ever known in the Army; and this was the main reason of the unvarying success which attended the military operations of the Company's troops; but when it came to a question of defending their soil, it was at once apparent that even the British officer can only do his best, and the Royal Niger Company had to acknowledge their helplessness.

Notwithstanding that we lost a great deal of territory which by nominal priority of right belonged to the Company, time alone can reveal whether what we renounced was worth retaining. However, France lost her hold on the entire navigable Niger, and had it not been for the annexe to the Convention, which granted her the lease

of two enclaves on the river, one near Fort Goldie and the other in the Delta, the Tricolour would probably not again have been seen on those waters. As it is, the lease must run for thirty years uninterruptedly, and hence France is at liberty to keep her vessels on the river and to ply from its mouth to above the ninth parallel of latitude. What good she can derive from the arrangement it is difficult to imagine; but she at least has the satisfaction of flying her flag on a river belonging to Great Britain alone. If it is possible to make a comparison, it is much the same thing as if Russia had two stations, one at Karachi and the other at Attock, on the Indus, with a right of way not only on the river itself, but from Attock through British India to her possessions in Central Asia. The difference in distance in the overland journey is very considerable, of course, but the principle is the same.

The methods adopted by France in her West African colonies differ essentially from our own; but it is from a military point of view alone that I am competent to say anything. Our soldiers and hers were camped within an hour's walk of each other for over two months; we frequently met their officers and non-commissioned officers, and had a great deal of official correspondence and not a few semi-friendly meetings. It was at the very outset quite palpable that they were well aware they had no lawful claim to be where we found them; and knowing this, it is not difficult to see how hard was their task in a political as opposed to a military sense. The natural politeness of their race was apparent in all their dealings; their jealous enthusiasm for their flag appeared to us almost fanatical; and their readiness to take offence made it very difficult at times to transact business; but, taken all round and looking at it now in the light of further knowledge of facts, the relations between us, though exceedingly strained, were such as could only have existed between honourable rivals; each striving to carry out the somewhat problematical orders of their respective Governments.

We never could discover what their officers and non-

commissioned officers did to relieve the monotony of Hinterland bush life and to get some bodily exercise. Sport of any kind they never indulged in; they were never seen on horseback, and owned that they had not attempted shooting game, for which they said there was no time.

Now this in a country full of game could only mean that there was no desire for it. A day's healthy sport does more for a white man in such lands than weeks of imaginary hard work without it. Moreover, I always found that those of our officers who never missed a chance of a day's shooting when it could be legitimately had, were almost invariably those who never failed to do right well whatever job fell to them. Let those who wish to cavil do so; but what better individual soldiers have ever been known than the Boers? It was the hunter's inborn instinct that helped them to make use of cover; it was the training gained in nature's wilds that suggested to them countless devices for deceiving and surprising their foe; and it was the hardiness acquired by years of open-air life that enabled them to laugh at climate, and despise comfort, and withal to maintain for over two years an almost unexampled struggle in the field; and, on the other hand, none but a nation possessing true sporting instincts could have ended the late war as it so happily has been ended.

The discipline exercised in French West African corps is of a different stamp to our own. From all we could gather, more power of an absolute nature was vested in their Europeans; death was frequently mentioned as a punishment which could be inflicted summarily. I do not mean to say this was actually the case, for I have no proof to produce, but more than once it was stated to me by their officers that it would be inflicted if certain contingencies occurred; and many deserters from their forces certainly spoke of it as an acknowledged fact. There can be no doubt that under certain circumstances in countries such as West Africa, it is necessary to punish immediately and severely, and a death sentence may sometimes be the only adequate one to avert disaster; but with us punishment in

this form for our own soldiers is seldom resorted to, and as a matter of fact, no sentence of death, except in Ashanti, in 1900, was ever passed on any soldier during the three years I was in West Africa.

After our occupation of Boussa and Illo many deserters not only came to Jebba, but brought their rifles and ammunition; these latter were, of course, invariably returned by us to the French. A number of them were Senegalese and spoke French; some of them moved down the Niger and became traders, I was informed.

As far as the native races were concerned, the French had, of course, a far more difficult task than we had in Borgu. When we arrived it was only to find a submissive population, who welcomed us; but then it must be remembered they had received a sharp lesson from the other white men; they had offered opposition, and had soon learnt that the game was not worth the candle.

On one occasion I personally accompanied a small column beyond Temanji, on the Kyama-Nikki road. We emerged from the forest on to a large farm in open country. A great many people were at work in the fields, but the instant our advanced guard appeared, they made a rush for the bush, and had soon vanished. We entered the farm enclosure and halted, but although we waited half an hour not a soul could be seen. A happy thought struck me, and I produced a large Union Jack from my holster, and had it displayed on the end of a long pole; within twenty minutes people began to turn up from all sides; they had been hiding in the bush, and having seen this same flag at Temanji, they became reassured, and in a short time most of them were assembled round it. I do not think I ever felt more proud of the old Rag than in this out-of-the-way village; it had a real significance.

Another story of the Union Jack is worth relating. At a village in Borgu arrived one morning a small caravan from the Fula State of Illorin, bound northwards for Illo. The caravan belonged to a Mahomedan trader, and, of course, he had with him a few slaves, women and children. As ill

luck for him would have it, this village had two days previously been occupied by us, and a non-commissioned officer and guard were in possession. The party arrived at night, and took up their quarters under a tree close by the village enclosure. At dawn the slave women and children were, as usual, allowed to stroll a short distance before starting on their daily march, and whilst watching the strange-looking soldiers rising from their straw beds they beheld the Union Jack, according to custom, raised; immediately the unfortunate creatures made a rush for it and held on to the staff, asking for protection from their owners. The non-commissioned officer sent them over to my camp, and during the inquiry they informed me that they had heard of and seen this same flag near Jebba, where everyone had been saying that under its folds no slavery could exist. I had them released and given clothing and food, and eventually sent them down to the Niger with one of our escorts. The only explanation the owner of the caravan had to offer was that he had been misinformed as to this village being in our possession, and had he known it he would not have come that way. And these are the people whom some folk at home speak of as our downtrodden African subjects. Stories of a similar nature were not uncommon in Nigeria.

Talking of flags—we found it most difficult to keep the Union Jack in repair owing to its many complicated stripes and widths, and the manufacture of new ones altogether puzzled our local tailors. On one occasion one of these produced a flag in which blue had taken the place of the red, and was much surprised to find it was of no use. The chief of a small village near Kyama had hoisted a white flag, and sewn on to it a gaudy-coloured picture of our Queen; he asked me if that would do to stamp his village as belonging to the English, and was assured he might take it for granted that such an emblem would be respected by all races. The French Tricolour is, of course, easily made up anywhere, owing to its simple character, but frequently we found that a strip was missing, owing to continued wind, and more than once I gave the non-commissioned officers in

command of Posts a piece of new stuff with which to complete their flag.

What medical arrangements they had for their outposts we were unable to discover, but on more than one occasion our doctors visited and prescribed for their officers at Kyama. Their Commissariat department was excellently run, and in Borgu, at least, they were better provided than we were. A glass of cognac or a bottle of claret was always offered us, and when they evacuated the fort at Kyama we found large quantities of biscuits and other tinned stores which had deteriorated and been thrown away. Their followers always stated that the rank and file lived better than our men; but perhaps this may have been caused by their being obliged to pay for everything they took from villages when on the line of march with our columns.

The last we saw of the French was immediately prior to their leaving Kyama. Captain Laussu, the officer in command, came over and lunched in our camp; we passed a very pleasant afternoon, forgot all our differences, and mutually agreed to dine together in London and Paris, and thus practically ratify the Convention. As he left our guard turned out and gave him a "general salute," the ensigns of the two nations were simultaneously lowered and raised, and the tricolour flag was soon lost in the turn of the road in the forests where, on and off, for four years it had reigned supreme.

CHAPTER XV

1899–1900

ON LEAVE—RETURN TO NIGERIA—THE COLONY TRANSFERRED TO THE CROWN—ZARIA EXPEDITION—ORDERED TO TAKE COMMAND OF KUMASSI RELIEF EXPEDITION—VOYAGE TO CAPE COAST CASTLE

IN April, 1899, after fourteen months' absence from England, I left West Africa on my first six months' leave. The delightful change from tropical jungle life to civilisation can only be appreciated by those who have lived the life we had to live during our first year's residence in Nigeria. The journey down river in my launch was very pleasant, and there were no regrets to leave behind, as I fully intended to return for another tour of service. For once the waters of the Niger appeared clear and cool; the air seemed laden with perfume, the birds seemed to be singing in a way one had never heard them sing before, and everything was *couleur de rose* as we steamed rapidly and smoothly down the river; for were we not homeward bound, and would not another few weeks see us again in old England?

As usual, I kept a gun and rifle handy in case of meeting anything worth shooting, and I was rewarded by getting an exciting evening amongst a herd of hippos. It was the day before we reached Forcados, the seaport at the river's mouth. The black skipper was anxious to get me in early next day, and in consequence we were late on the move; it was very foggy, and night was coming on, when we suddenly found ourselves surrounded by hippos. Within two minutes I had selected one huge monster not thirty yards from us and fired, hitting him hard; he at once disappeared under water, but before I could reload was under the launch, and the skipper, in order to avoid him, put the engines on full speed

ahead; the propeller struck the amphibian a smart blow, but the shock was very severe, and the boat heeled over on her side till I thought she meant to turn turtle. I was then standing on the small sun deck, without any neans of holding on, and to save myself from going overboard I seized hold of the funnel, which, unfortunately, was exceedingly hot; leaving go my hold I prepared for a dive, which would probably have landed me on the hippo's back, when the launch, recovering herself, took a lurch to starboard, and as she did so I scrambled to the stern and jumped on to the deck, where I breathed freely once more. I did not get the hippo, but was very thankful he left us alone after that, for a second attempt might have ended in his knocking a hole in the old boat.

The 23rd of September, 1899, came round all too soon, and with it ended my leave, and I was once again in the Channel bound for the Niger. This time, however, I had with me my parson brother, who was on leave from India, and thought he could not do better than spend six months in West Africa, and thus not only see something of a little-known land, but at the same time get some big game shooting of a different kind to what he had been accustomed. Colonel Lugard saw us off at Euston, and with him was Major Booth, of the Northumberland Fusiliers, my old Staff officer; alas! it was to be the last time I should ever see him. He presented me with a Malacca stick, and I remember his saying, "I hope you will never have need to use it; but it is a good thing to have by one in West Africa." It was always a faithful friend to me, and regarding it I shall have a story to tell later.

The steamer *Bornu* was a very different boat to the *Benin*, in which I had done my first passage; we had good electric lights and comfortable cabins, but speed was not considered a necessity.

I read, during the first part of the voyage, an excellent life of that fine soldier Sir Charles Napier, and the more one studies his character and all his peculiar idiosyncrasies, the more one admires his absolute individuality and his

contempt of all that savoured of meanness. After reading the book for the second time all I could say was, "I should have liked to serve under him."

At Sierra Leone we most of us went ashore and took a special train to a place called Waterloo; they are very military in this colony, and the next station was named Wellington. The line had only recently been opened, and is very pretty and well constructed. We spent a really instructive day, and got a good insight into native character, as you find it when garnished with a smattering of European education. One of our passengers, whose exuberance of spirits could not be damped by any climate or circumstance, propounded a scheme which furnished us with abundant amusement, and was really far more comical than any description can paint it. Hoping that the visit of a large number of Europeans in a special train might cause a small sensation in the town, he determined to make an offer of delivering a lecture before the inhabitants, and the subject he chose was the "Polypterus of West Africa." Now, if nothing else would have caught on, the very name would have done so with men who would have listened patiently to so abstruse a subject rather than own that they did not understand its meaning. Having ascertained from the station-master who the person most likely to further the object in view might be, the tourists paid him a visit, during which they were assured that nothing would be more acceptable to the dwellers in Waterloo than a lecture from so eminent a Professor of Cambridge University on a subject of such great interest to all educated people. Arrangements were at once made to post printed notices in the town, and the only stipulation was that the performance should be under the distinguished patronage of our host. A special train was to convey would-be thirsters after knowledge from Sierra Leone and other out-stations, and the funniest item of all was that he should apply to the military authorities for the loan of the brass band of the Sierra Leone Light Horse.

It never seemed to occur to the already proud personage

that as the whole Colony probably only possessed three or four ponies, it would be difficult to raise a corps of horse, but that was of little consequence; what he wanted was the band, and probably believed it was, in reality, all that was necessary to constitute the corps. No need to enter into further details, except to say that after everything had been satisfactorily arranged we were asked to inspect the town hall and interview the manager. We did both, but great was the surprise when it was discovered that he was none other than a gentleman of the highest local standing. He fell in with the views of the Professor until the awful truth burst on him that the lecture was to be under the patronage of someone other than himself; the light died from his eyes, and the mission would have ended in failure had not everyone discovered that it was time to start back if they were to travel by the mail steamer. We were escorted down to the train, where we found our jolly skipper had been having a sound sleep, and soon left Waterloo, amid the waving of handkerchiefs and the regrets of the man who "might have been."

As there was no time clause in West African mail contracts, ships' Captains went as they pleased; and it was not uncommon in those days to put back a couple of Ports in order to pick up an odd cask of palm oil or something equally uninteresting; nor was it considered at all out of the common to anchor off some pottering little town and remain there indefinitely in the hope of picking up some cargo, rather than that it should be carried off by a rival skipper. All one could do was to grumble and wait; but it was no good doing the former, and to do the latter patiently was more conducive to health and good temper. Our Captain, Hely, was really most obliging, and it was difficult to argue with one so good-tempered. At last, after twenty-eight weary days at sea or rolling at anchor off a surf-beaten coast, we reached Forcados once more, and were in Lokoja on the 23rd October, exactly a month after leaving England.

In November Major Kemball, Royal Artillery, arrived at Jebba; he had written and asked me to get him out to the

Niger. I had parted with him on the North-West Frontiers of India two years previously, and after much correspondence Lugard had obtained his services from Simla, where he was employed on the Headquarter Staff of the Army. He joined as second in command of the Frontier Force. He was at first disappointed to find things were then so quiet on the Niger, but he has since had no cause to regret his coming. In little over eighteen months he was a Substantive Lieutenant-Colonel, and had earned a D.S.O. for his good services in the Field, and soon after was appointed Inspecting Officer of the combined West African Frontier Forces, with the rank of Brigadier-General, which he still holds.

General Lugard returned to Nigeria from England on the 30th December, two days prior to the taking over of the Royal Niger Company's territories and military forces by the Crown. On the 1st January, 1900, the official ceremony took place on the constabulary ground at Lokoja; the entire Imperial and Company's troops were on parade. The Company's flag was saluted and then finally lowered, and the Union Jack took its place. General Lugard was sworn in as Her Majesty's High Commissioner, and the troops marched past. Thus after many years of useful work the Royal Niger Company Chartered and Limited ceased to exist, and the Niger Company took its place as a purely trading concern. Lugard gave a big dinner to all officers and others, at which nearly eighty sat down to table, and a most pleasant evening was passed.

It is, of course, easy to find fault, especially with those who have been the pioneers of civilisation in semi-savage countries; and it is, therefore, only natural that the Royal Niger Company has had many enemies; but if we analyse the difficulties it had to encounter and the immense responsibilities it undertook, one must admire and respect the empire spirit which prompted its founders, and the loyal tenacity with which its servants kept up that spirit to the end of its existence.

My own opinion has always been that the chief fault in its

administration was a want of generosity towards its subordinate European employees. If anyone deserved well of their employers it was these men; and yet no one conversant with the country as it then was would argue that they were well paid. They had to live their lives in the most uninteresting and frequently unwholesome places; they had great responsibilities and incessant work, and it would have been wise to treat them with greater consideration. However, the fact remains that, comparatively speaking, no Company could have been better served; there are many reasons for this, which I do not intend to enter into here; but the chiefest of them was, I have no doubt, that at the head of affairs was a man whose name is known to and respected by all who have ever taken any kind of interest in affairs West or East African. To Sir George Goldie is undoubtedly due the fact that Northern Nigeria had not become a French possession; and it was his strong character that had kept intact the Company of which he was the head.

There are those who point the finger of scorn at our West African hinterlands; but there are possibilities beyond the ken of such Little Englanders, which time will prove, and that time is not perhaps so far off as many imagine.

I am not competent to forecast the direction in which such possibilities will probably make themselves felt; but at least anyone can see for himself what giant strides have been made even within a few years. When one ship follows another both up and down the river, all laden; and caravans cross the Niger daily from places which not long ago were only known from the stray stories of travellers, they are evidence of the trade which may be expected when the slave hunter is a thing of the past, and law and order have been established in the land. Many millions of people are only too anxious to find an opportunity of purchasing goods that Europe alone can supply, and which to-day cannot reach them. Railways and roads will alter all that, and cities like Sokoto and Gando, with innumerable others, will offer great markets for English trade.[1]

[1] All this was written before the recent expeditions.

This does not take into account the other side of the picture—the indigenous produce of these vast hinterlands. To-day we are still only in the infancy of our knowledge regarding these, and who can tell what sources of wealth may not lie hidden between the great Rivers Niger and Benue? It is not so many years since the mines of Johannesburg were an unsealed book. Stranger things happen daily than the discovery of some precious metal, which will repay tenfold our expenditure on the Niger.

On the 5th January my brother, to my great regret, was obliged to leave for England. The best time of year for shooting had not come round, and the grass was still very high, hence he got but little sport; but he had seen a good deal of a strange country and something of military life as it is on the Niger. The same morning that he left I had a Field day of all troops in garrison at Lokoja, and at the very close of the operations I met with a serious accident which laid me up for many weeks; I slipped off a high rock, and my leg, which I had injured in Burmah thirteen years previously, suddenly collapsed, and I was obliged to rest, done up in plaster of Paris. West African life is fairly trying under any conditions, but when half crippled and with a mass of work to be done it takes it out of one; and it is no wonder white men are frequently obliged to give in. However, I was sufficiently well in a month to get about on crutches.

During January, 1900, it became necessary to punish the Munchi and Bassa tribes of the River Benue. These people had done all in their power to harry and annoy the Government—killing and looting travellers and cutting the new telegraph line. An expedition was finally sent against them, and Major Lowry Cole, Royal Welch Fusiliers, was placed in command. There was much sharp bush fighting, during which Captain Eaton, of the Buffs, was wounded, and there were a good many casualties amongst the rank and file. Lowry Cole conducted the operations most satisfactorily, and the tribes submitted to the terms imposed by the High Commissioner.

General Lugard had by this time established his head-quarters at Jebba, and was working all and every day to set things on a proper footing and look into past events. It was not long before he found that notwithstanding every desire to avoid hostilities, he was obliged to take up the cudgels; and within three months of his arrival, in addition to the operations on the Benue, he had four other Columns converging on the country near Zaria, one of the powerful Hausa States north of the bend of the Niger. The far greater events then taking place in South Africa naturally totally obscured the work of these small Columns, which in ordinary times would have created a small sensation at home; but the officers engaged were not at all the kind of men who wished their deeds trumpeted. They, however, all had their rewards, for Lugard is not a man to allow anything to obscure good work done by his subordinates. There was considerable opposition on the part of the various tribes, and the names of Colonel Morland, of the 60th Rifles; Captain Abadie, Royal Scots; Captain Bryan, Lincolnshire Regiment; Cubitt, Royal Artillery; Colonel Kemball, and others were all brought to special notice. There were some quite conspicuous deeds of gallantry performed, notably that of a medical officer, who sucked the poison from an arrow wound, and thus saved the life of Major Lowry Cole.

All this active experience in the field was turning the young soldiers of the Frontier Force into good fighting men, and giving the officers an experience of bush work which was about to stand us in good stead in Ashanti, though none of us then dreamed of the good fortune ahead of us. Meantime the telegrams and papers gave us full details of the great war in South Africa, and many were the hand-shakes, the last in this life, that we gave our comrades ordered to join their corps in the Transvaal, and it had become a common occurrence to see them leaving us one by one, sorry in some ways, of course, to go, but the joy of strife written on their faces. It is strange but true how soon British officers imbibe the bloodthirsty spirit which gives promise

of strife. It is inborn; for many of those who left joyfully for the front were not by nature of a fighting disposition. On the contrary, some of them were the last you would have picked out as inclined that way; yet the order to go was plainly a new lease of life to them, and it was never long in being obeyed. The night we heard of Paardeberg had been celebrated as joyously and loyally on the Niger as in any quarter of the globe, and even amongst the black soldiers, most of whom had only heard of England as a distant mythical land, the wild excitement had caught on, and the name of Lord Roberts might have been heard in the barracks of the Frontier Force from Illo to Lokoja. It was only a remote corner of the Empire, but it did its full share in honouring those to whom honour was due. However, each and all of us has a task and duty, and I felt mine lay where the State had sent me, and to that department of the State which had honoured me so long with its trust and confidence.

Towards the end of March, 1900, General Lugard asked me to proceed to Zaria and take command of the combined columns then converging on that country. I was, of course, delighted, and had arranged everything for a start, when matters were upset by telegraphic orders from home, directing him to send a considerable number of men to the Gold Coast to aid in quelling a revolt in Ashanti. Nothing was then known of any serious rising, but the troops were started at a few hours' notice. The mobility of the force was proved in a remarkable degree, for within twenty-three hours of the order the troops had left fully armed and equipped for active service. But this was not all; Hausas, Yorubas, and Nupés alike responded willingly to the call to cross the seas and embark on an expedition in an unknown land. One must have some knowledge of the native character to understand what this meant. It was no question of ordinary campaigning, but an order to go and fight the Queen's enemies in regions which such superstitious people looked on much as the Brahmin of a century ago would have looked on a voyage to Europe at a moment's notice; but the spirit of their officers had been imbibed by the men, and I never saw

greater enthusiasm than was displayed by all ranks to "go to the war." Many of them had no idea but that it was to South Africa they were going; such trifling details, however, did not worry them. It was enough that they too were going to fight.

With Lugard's permission I started on the 2nd May, with an escort of ten men only, to join the Zaria columns. Colonel Kemball and Captain Molesworth, the officer in command of our Engineer company on the Niger, accompanied me, and we marched straight across country. We had got out some ninety miles when on the afternoon of the 10th May, just as we had pitched our tents, a mounted detachment arrived with a note for me marked "very urgent." I was not surprised, for I had had a good many orders of this sort in my life, but coming as this did in such a wild and unknown land, I felt sure it was something to do with active service. It was from Lugard, forwarding a telegram from Mr. Chamberlain, directing me to proceed to the Gold Coast and assume command of the forces for the relief of Kumassi.

I started at dawn next morning with the escort which had brought my orders and reached Jebba in three days. I shall never forget those seventy-two hours of life; for hardly had we left camp when I was taken seriously ill, and after six hours' riding could no longer sit on my pony without assistance. Crawling along at two miles an hour, dismounting every few minutes and lying flat on my back in the wet, dripping grass, I managed somehow to cover about thirty miles a day. Nothing could relieve the agonising pains; I had no medicines and no one to ask advice of, and when at last, quite exhausted, I reached the Niger opposite Jebba, I cared little what became of me. I just managed to cross the river and crawl into bed, out of which I doubted whether I should ever rise.

It was an attack of tin poisoning—one of the curses of African life to those who are affected in that way. There was, however, too much to be done to think of petty annoyances, and after a halt of one day, to hand over the office and

fifty other details, I bid good-bye to my Chief, Lugard, and left Jebba for the last time. Pleased as I was to find myself bound for active service once more, and this time as Commander, I felt sorry when the time came to say farewell to my barren island. We had found it a desert, and left it anything but a desert; every stone and tree was well known to me, and, after all, sentiment must play some part even in real rough life. I felt the satisfaction, at least, that I was taking with me many of my own good soldiers, whom I had seen through all the stages from savage recruits to fairly trained and seasoned men, and they were a link with the past two years of life. Lugard walked with me some distance out of Jebba, and I waved him farewell. May good fortune some day take me his way again.

With me was only one officer, Dr. Tichborne, of the Frontier Force, and a small escort. Two routes lay before us: either to go by steamer down the Niger and take the ocean mailboat from Forcados to Cape Coast Castle on the Gold Coast, or to march direct across country from Jebba to Illorin, and thence through the whole colony of Lagos, down to Lagos town itself, and from there get the weekly mail or a special steamer to Cape Coast Castle. The first was, of course, far the easiest journey; but with the Niger at low water, and the uncertainty of finding a steamer at the seaport Forcados, I determined to march overland, as by this means, at least, I could make my own pace, and would be in telegraphic communication with England. Once at Lagos, it was only a two days' sea voyage to our colony on the Gold Coast.

It was fated to be a disastrous journey for me, but it turned out best in the end, as we arrived at Lagos on the 24th May—the Queen's birthday—and Sir George Denton, the Governor, had a ship waiting outside the bar, on to which we proceeded without halting in the town, and landed at Cape Coast Castle on the 26th May. At the risk of being accused of writing of self only, I feel a short account of our journey from Jebba to Lagos may not be uninteresting, as showing the infinite difficulties the white man has often to

contend against in West Africa. The path between Jebba and Illorin, the large Mahomedan town some fifty-two miles south of the Niger on the Lagos road, is very stony in parts, and the consequence was my pony was dead lame by the time we arrived there. Ponies are not shod (or were not then) in Nigeria, and so there was little to be done for him; and yet Lagos must be reached. After leaving Illorin, therefore, I was obliged to walk more than half the way; our average marches were twenty-five miles, and when it was not pelting with rain, the sun came out very strong, and one felt absolutely suffocated with heat and the closeness of the atmosphere. The road, moreover, was almost treeless, and the track led over great rolling plains of low bush and grass; there was barely any shade even at halting places, and every form of insect life abounded.

The day after leaving Illorin, the same illness I had suffered from north of Jebba came on again, and in addition I got a sharp attack of ophthalmia, which obliged me to bandage my eyes; thus, with no pony and racked with aches of all kinds, I was obliged to trudge on over those pitiless plains, marching from dawn till near or late into dark every day. Had it not been for the excellent Dr. Tichborne, who was always invaluable in every position, as I was soon to learn in Ashanti, I could never have gone on at all. Passing through the large towns Ogbomosho, Oyo, and Ibadan, we reached the vicinity of the Rail Head, on the new Lagos Ibadan Railway. My sorrows, I hoped, were near an end, but the last and hardest blow was yet to fall. In order to get to Rail Head it was necessary to leave the regular track and travel through the forest cuttings. I had managed to rig up a hammock at Ibadan, as it was impossible for me to walk any further, both my feet being badly blistered and my boots worn out. As I lay in the hammock, I could only think of Ashanti and what was to come; but I soon found there was more than enough immediately before us to occupy my attention locally. The path got worse every moment; we had left the rolling plains and entered dense, heavy forest country and high grass.

Thunder and lightning, accompanied by squalls, soon brought the hammock men to a standstill, and to complete our woes darkness came on and we lost the path.

There was nothing to do but once again get out and walk somehow; for to remain in the forest would probably have meant death to me, ill as I was. With Tichborne's help I crawled on till we came suddenly on the railway track, and, thinking ourselves fortunate indeed, we kept in one of the deep cuttings. After walking some hundreds of yards this one proved to end suddenly in a sheer wall with some three feet of water at the bottom. We turned back, and whilst attempting to climb up the steep side I slipped and my knee collapsed. It was the same bad leg of Burmah and Niger days, but this time it was a permanent injury, and I could not rise again. Needless to prolong the story; Tichborne almost carried me the remaining two miles; through bog and mire, in pitch darkness, we struggled on till we found ourselves in the friendly shelter of a European railway contractor's hut about ten o'clock at night. He was kindness itself, though his space was limited, and weary at heart and in body I was only too glad to lie down in a small room half full of picks, shovels, and spades, and the other half of which was the poultry yard which supplied his daily meals. The cocks and hens shared my bed and roosted on my discarded dripping khakee, but I recked little of all this; with bandaged eyes, blistered feet, and sprained knee, I slept as soundly as if in my home in old England. Next day we were in the train, a strange experience indeed for my black soldiers, who sat on the sideless trucks in awe, and said little, but thought worlds, as at an exceedingly dangerous pace we sped over a new and hardly half-finished line. The railway authorities were most civil and obliging, and we were in Lagos the following day and at Cape Coast Castle on the 26th May.

As we dropped anchor about a mile from the old Dutch fort, which had witnessed the landing of two large British expeditions for Kumassi, I could not help asking myself two questions over and over again; the first was, "Will



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these black troops face the Ashantis?" and the second, "Do they realise in England what campaigning out here means during this tropical downpour?" I had been led to understand that things were in an unsatisfactory state ashore, and also that nothing systematic had so far been attempted as regards placing the operations under one chief, and I was prepared to find enough to do. But what I certainly was not prepared to find was that there were no troops, no food, and practically no ammunition. There were no orders to refer to, no record of the distribution of officers and men, and no staff of any sort or kind; all was chaos, and in short Dr. Tichborne and myself appeared to be the sum total of the Field Force at the Base of operations. My landing was a sad one for me, as the first news I received was of the death in South Africa of that gallant soldier Major Booth, Northumberland Fusiliers. He had served on the staff in Nigeria, and died in action, as all knew he could alone die, viz. fighting bravely.

At Cape Coast Castle the only troops were some two hundred men of the Southern Nigeria Battalion, under command of Lieutenant-Colonel Carter, C.M.G., the Royal Scots, and these were already fallen in and on the point of starting for the north. I spent the day in endeavouring to gather such information as was possible, viz. by questioning every European I could find and making a summary of it all. I had with me only one British non-commissioned officer, Sergeant Farini of the Durham Light Infantry; he had been chief clerk in the Brigade Office at Jebba, and between us we had to make a beginning of all that must be done, first in collecting and then entirely organising and equipping a considerable Force, and raising the necessary army of carriers, without which no movements were possible. The position appeared an almost hopeless one, and the only consolation was the telegraph wire, over which, before many hours had elapsed, I was despatching one message after another to England, to Northern Nigeria, and to every intervening colony. Of one thing I felt positive, and that was that immediately the position was explained to and realised

by the Colonial Office, I should at once not only be given an absolutely free hand, but that all and more than I demanded, whatever it might be, would be forthcoming if possible. This is exactly what happened. Weeks, and in some cases even months, elapsed before the necessary troops and stores arrived at the Base of operations, but these delays were only caused by the physical impossibility of getting them there any sooner, owing to the great distances that had to be covered.

It was my first independent military command, and I could not but draw comparisons with my previous experiences, and in this light matters appeared positively ludicrous. Here was a besieged garrision 145 miles inland, with almost impassable roads, unbridged rivers, a few scattered detachments, and a very numerous and comparatively well-armed enemy between Kumassi and me; and my task was not only to relieve this garrison, but to carry provisions and ammunition sufficient to sustain it, and withal to perform this operation within a very limited time. Moreover, the number of troops concentrated in Kumassi was then, as I learnt later, greater than the total numbers at my disposal on the line of communications and at the Base of operations combined. To the veriest tyro in military affairs the situation will be sufficiently clear to need no further explanation, and I could, therefore, well afford to smile when, long after the events I am now speaking of were things of the past, I read Lady Hodgson's interesting book, *The Siege of Kumassi*, in which she accuses me of needless delay in bringing the long-looked-for relief. She is a brave woman, who has once again proved that there is nothing English ladies cannot and will not endure, and I have too high an estimation of her sense of fairness and honesty to think that she still entertains the opinions she then expressed.

One of the peculiar difficulties to be contended with at the outset was the fact that no official or other account of the Ashanti war of 1874, in which Sir Garnet Wolseley commanded, was to be found in the archives of the Gold Coast. It is impossible to understand why or how such an omission

could have been allowed to so long exist. Surely in the Colony itself some record might have been preserved; it would have been of immense help to us, but all I could get was a couple of skimpy blue-books, which related to treaties, palavers, and everything except the fighting work of the expedition. The records of the 1895 operations under Sir Francis Scott were of no use to us, as in that year the Ashantis had allowed our Force to march unopposed to Kumassi, not realising till too late that the object was to seize their King. Nevertheless, we all knew enough of the 1874 campaign to understand easily the difference between our position and that of the Columns which then marched to Kumassi.

The most serious of these was the fact that we were embarking on our task at the beginning of the annual rains and the season most deadly to Europeans; we also knew that in 1874 the work had been commenced at the close of the rains and ended before the next rainy season had set in. Then again, with us time was an urgent consideration; it was not merely a case of performing certain operations as quickly as practicable, but every day and hour was of the utmost importance, and as a matter of fact we only reached Kumassi on the last possible day on which the garrison was calculated to be able to hold out. Lastly, and in some ways most important of all, was the material of which our Columns were composed.

It is no disparagement of the faithful black soldiers I commanded to say that there were very few, even amongst their own officers, who at the outset had not the gravest misgivings as to their ability to force their way to Kumassi. Some, I am sorry to say, did not conceal their mistrust, and there was perhaps not one European who felt positive of getting to the goal within the appointed time. There were very good reasons too for such fears. In 1874 the Field Force had been composed of the best British battalions—the Royal Welch Fusiliers, the Black Watch, and a battalion of the Rifle Brigade, formed the Infantry Brigade, and in addition there was a detachment of Bluejackets. The native auxiliaries

need hardly be mentioned after these, although in their own way they had assisted the advance. If, then, such splendid troops, with a fully organised staff, and the eyes of the country on them, had found it no easy task to reach and destroy Kumassi, what could be the thoughts of us who must perform the same task with black troops alone, most of whom had under two years' service, and none of whom were bound to us by any ties but those of mercenaries. Of course the force in 1874 was advancing through absolutely unknown country, whereas, at least, in 1900 there was a road as far as the Prah, and a fairly marked track north of it; but roads in Ashanti during the rains were of little assistance, and often a positive obstacle, for they soon became churned into seas of deep mud and veritable sloughs of despond. The easiest marching we often found was along little-frequented village paths, before there had been time for the long Columns to turn them into quagmires.

Looked at, therefore, in any light, the prospect for us was, to say the least of it, far from an assuring one. It was high time that some kind of order should be evolved out of the hopeless muddle into which the Line of communications had fallen. Between Bekwai and Kumassi itself was a tract of some twenty miles of country, in entire occupation of a numerous enemy, and through which no message could be got by either bribery or reward. The only facts known to me were that Sir Frederic Hodgson, Governor of the Gold Coast, was shut up in the fort, which was supposed to have a garrison of six officers, three medical officers, and about five hundred men. In addition, there were with the besieged four ladies and five other Europeans. I was not then aware that in addition to this garrison considerable reinforcements had reached Kumassi from Kintampo, in the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast. These reinforcements, under command of Major Morris, D.S.O., Royal Irish Regiment, consisted of seven Europeans, two hundred and thirty rank and file, and eighty native levies; they had marched down at the request of the Governor, who had asked for them by special messengers sent from Kumassi,

and arrived there on the 15th May. Of this march I shall have more to say later on. The total Force, therefore, actually in Kumassi when I landed at Cape Coast was about seven hundred and fifty fighting men, exclusive of officers, Europeans, and friendly native levies; and there were in addition a great number of Field and other guns of various kinds.

The distance from Cape Coast to Kumassi is 145 miles, and this may best be divided into two sections: the first, from the sea to the River Prah, 71 miles, was traversed by a road, as roads go in the Gold Coast; but at this time the path was in very bad order, and the numerous ravines and rivers were unbridged. There was a telegraph wire, which was practically useless for five days in the week, owing to breaks from falling trees, or carelessness in the management. The second, or northern section, from the Prah to Kumassi, was traversed by a forest path which showed signs of once having been a fairly easy track, but was now so overgrown with jungle, and so boggy from incessant rain, that it was in many places impassable. In this section the telegraph had practically been totally destroyed or removed by the enemy, and there were no signs of bridges of any sort. The Prah itself at this time of year is a deep, swift-running river, some eighty to a hundred yards broad, and the sole means of crossing was one small ferry-boat. Streams, which in dry weather were hardly noticeable, had become most difficult obstacles, and there were many, such as the Fum and the Adra, between the Prah and Kumassi, which could only be crossed by wading, or by means of roughly constructed bamboo and plantain rafts.

Along this line of communications were scattered the following troops, which had been gradually brought by driblets from the various Colonies in West Africa, landed at Cape Coast, and after that had travelled northwards as best they could; all without cohesion or plans; all intent on getting to Kumassi "before the show was over"; and all were, at the time I write of, hopelessly immobile from various causes—repulses by the enemy, want of food or

ammunition, or both, and absence of carriers. The advanced Post was at Esumeja, near Bekwai, which is about twenty miles south of Kumassi, on the Kumassi Cape Coast road; this was garrisoned by four hundred men of the West African Frontier Force, under command of Captain Hall, and he had with him six Europeans and a ·75-millimètre Vickers-Maxim gun. Captain Slater with about thirty men was besieged at Kwissa, about twenty miles south of Esumeja; Lieutenant-Colonel Wilkinson, with two officers and one hundred and sixty men, was on the River Prah; and finally, as before stated, three officers and two hundred men, under Lieutenant-Colonel Carter, were on the point of starting from Cape Coast. The total number, therefore, including sick and wounded, under my command on landing, for the relief of Kumassi consisted of fifteen officers and seven hundred and eighty men all told.

On the 1st of June further reinforcements amounting to eleven Europeans and two hundred and eighty men reached Cape Coast from Nigeria, and by the 5th of the month matters had so far advanced that I was able to leave Cape Coast for the River Prah, seventy-one miles, and this became our advanced Base. During the ten days' necessary halt at Cape Coast, everything required for the prosecution of operations had been telegraphed for. There was no reserve of rice, the staple food of both troops and carriers; all available rice at the seaports on the West Coast was telegraphed for, and any price demanded was at once paid; in addition, a cable to England secured a monthly consignment of one hundred tons, which continued throughout the time the expedition lasted. Large supplies of European rations, clothing, blankets, hospital requisites, tents, and small arms and gun ammunition, etc., were soon on the way from England, and with an extemporised staff, new to the work but full of zeal, matters had begun to wear a different aspect.

Moreover, as news gradually reached the base, it became clear that the original rising had assumed altogether unexpected proportions, and I several times had to ask for, and was at once promised, extra troops, with three Vickers-Maxim

·75-millimètre and four 7-pounder guns. In addition the Colonial Office offered to send still further reinforcements from Sierra Leone and British Central Africa, with a detachment of Indian Sikhs; all these I at once accepted. The services of half a battalion of the West India Regiment was also offered, but it was impossible to take these into the hinterland with our extremely limited number of carriers.

The Transport question is always a most difficult one in West African warfare, and for a long time threatened to wreck the expedition. The lazy, poorer inhabitants of the Gold Coast add to their lethargy the still worse trait of abject cowardice. The sound of a gun fired in anger is the sign for a bolt, and neither punishment nor reward will ever cure these miserable people. It was not long before I found it would be impossible to procure even a tithe of our requirements from the Colony itself, although at that time, as a matter of fact, the inexorable law of necessity was in full operation, and unwilling carriers were being hustled as far as, and occasionally even beyond the Prah, to feed the troops.

This kind of work, however, has its limits, and you cannot employ half your troops in guarding and goading on your Transport in face of an enemy. The laws of the Colony, too, appear to have been framed with a regard for their feelings, which is perhaps unequalled in any other African possession. The law and the people were against our military methods, and although we were obliged to override both at times, it was simpler to try and obtain carriers elsewhere. General Lugard sent us as many as he could spare from Nigeria; Sir Frederic Cardew, Governor of Sierra Leone, with a whole-heartedness that we all appreciated thoroughly, got together batches of five hundred or more and shipped them to Cape Coast, until the numbers from this Colony eventually amounted to many thousands. Sir Arthur Hardinge, Consul-General for Zanzibar, raised and equipped three thousand men from East Africa, and despatched them in transports round the Cape. Thus slowly but surely the long

arm of England was gathering the sinews of war; and thus surely but very slowly the Column which must reach the goal, Kumassi, was advancing step by step, first without food or requisites, then with a small portion of each, and lastly with just sufficient, and no more, of both, to save the honour of the flag and those few remaining brave men who were still holding out, casting longing eyes over the black forests of Ashanti, and praying God we might be able to arrive in time. No doubt ever entered their minds as to the possibility of their fellow-countrymen dallying by the way, wasting their time at Prahsu; they knew full well that if help could come it would do so, and if it did not, that it would be owing to the physical impossibility of the task.

In order to make the situation clear as far as the relief Columns were concerned, it is necessary to state shortly what had taken place on the Line of communications prior to my arrival at the coast. The troops I found under my command had arrived in the Colony in driblets; first it was thought that a few small detachments would suffice for the relief of Kumassi; these were accordingly sent, and as it was discovered that the rebellion was rapidly spreading, other small bodies were landed and pushed up the road; but the old story of "unity is strength" played no part in this form of strategy, and the end was what might have been expected —no control, no cohesion, chaos everywhere. Captain Hall, who was the first to arrive with any considerable body of troops after the actual siege of Kumassi had begun, had reached the Prah, crossed that river into the country of the Adansis, and after holding a big palaver at Fomena (the same place at which Sir Garnet Wolseley's final treaty had been signed), had obtained the signature of Quaccoe Inkanza, the King of the country, to a document, in which that chief expressed his unbounded loyalty and attachment to the British Government.

Promises from native chiefs in West Africa, documentary or otherwise, are not worth the paper they are written on; this one proved no exception, for of all our bitterest foes the Adansis were the worst. I do not think the King had much

to say to this, for when eventually he was captured and brought in he appeared too old, feeble, and inane to make it possible for him to have been more than a figure-head. It is now evident that it would have been better not to ask the King to sign any document whatever; he should have been informed that he was expected to be loyal, and that if he chose at such a time to be otherwise, he and his country would be wiped out. It would have had far more effect. As it was, the foolish old man believed that we set great store by his people, and once you engender such a belief in an African's mind it follows he immediately does all in his power to thwart, if not openly to resist, your plans. Inkanza chose the latter course, and for long the hostility of the Adansis was a great source of trouble, as the main route from the coast passed through the midst of their country, and our communications were in consequence always in danger of being severed. Captain Hall moved on from Fomena and arrived at Esumeja on the main Kumassi road, three miles from Bekwai.

The King of Bekwai is a powerful chief; his men all come of a fighting stock, and in days gone by these had more than once furnished the vanguard of Ashanti armies on the day of battle. The present chief proved himself a true friend to our Government throughout the campaign, and was well rewarded, as he deserved to be, at the end of it. Being longer headed than his Adansi neighbours, and seeing that we had four hundred men and a ·75 Vickers-Maxim gun, the Bekwai ruler at once made up his mind to throw in his lot with us, and, having made this resolve, he placed his entire resources at our command, as well as his town and such Levies as he could rely on. It was fortunate for us that he did so, as at that very moment the Adansis tore up their treaty and openly declared for the Ashantis. Hall was thus left isolated at Esumeja with twenty thousand Ashantis between him and Kumassi, and his communications with the Prah practically cut off. The decision of the Adansis had been considerably hastened by the fact that a large number of the Ashantis from those besieging Kumassi had suddenly arrived in their

midst, threatened them with all kinds of pains and penalties unless they at once cast in their lot with them, and thus secured their allegiance.

Esumeja, where Hall now was, is just within Bekwai territory, but it is the frontier in this direction, and two miles to the east of it is the large town of Kokofu. The Kokofus had joined the Ashanti army round Kumassi, had erected large stockades to resist any advance on our part from the direction of Bekwai, and had even become so bold as to attempt a feeble attack on Esumeja. Captain Hall decided to make a reconnaissance in the direction of Kokofu to ascertain the strength of the enemy, and carried it out on the 23rd of May. He reached a village a mile from the town, which he attacked and burnt, but was at once surrounded by vastly superior numbers and forced to retire with two Europeans and six men wounded. Notwithstanding that he had a quick-firing 12½-pounder gun, well served and worked by a British non-commissioned officer, and a ·303 Maxim, he was unable to keep the foe at a distance, and was closely followed into his temporary fort.

The following day, the 24th May, when in England the great Queen's birthday was being duly celebrated, there took place at Kwissa, only twenty miles south of Esumeja, another skirmish, the records of which figure in no despatches, but which might make a stirring story if told as they deserve to be. At this place were two European gentlemen belonging to the Ahuri gold mines, Messrs. Cookson and Jones; they were not aware of the exact state of affairs, but were waiting in hopes of finding some troops passing that way. Lieutenant Slater of the 3rd Battalion East Lancashire Regiment with about thirty men arrived from the Prah on the 23rd May without meeting any resistance on the way, and halted at Kwissa in accordance with orders. Next day the two civilians set out for Bekwai, but were forced to return to Kwissa, as their carriers were fired on and bolted. Lieutenant Slater at once started with twenty-five men to discover the cause. Two miles out from camp he was attacked from all sides, and with the first volley lost three

killed and three severely wounded out of his small column. Finding that the heaviest fire was at the front he immediately pushed on to assist his small advanced party; although only a few minutes elapsed, yet by the time he got there another man had been killed and five more severely wounded; this reduced his fighting strength to thirteen men, and with these he had to carry or escort back all the wounded, leaving the dead on the ground. With two men in advance and two in rear, and using the remainder as bearers, he returned as rapidly as possible. The Adansis had made a start, for this proved to be their first actual attack on us, and so pleased apparently were they at getting possession of the dead men's ·303 carbines that they allowed Slater to get safely back to Kwissa. In his modest report he writes, "I particularly desire to bring to your notice the men who acted as bearers, as they showed great pluck in quietly slinging their rifles and carrying the wounded, expecting at every moment a volley from the thick bush, and knowing that another wounded man would mean either having to leave him, or ourselves taking up a position round a tree." These are the African soldiers with whom it was my good fortune to serve for three years in Nigeria and Ashanti. Yes!

> "For all their dusky hide,
> They were white, pure white, inside."

Hall, being very short of provisions and ammunition, and still being unaware of the disaffection of the Adansis, sent down two parties of carriers from Esumeja to Kwissa to bring up supplies from the Prah; each of these parties were attacked by the Adansi tribesmen, four soldiers and a carrier being killed and fifteen wounded. Lieutenant Beamish, the officer in command, rushed and burnt Dompoassi in retaliation, and, moving south, relieved Slater at Kwissa. Thus it will be seen that between Kumassi and the Base at Cape Coast Castle the only Posts in our possession were in a very precarious position, and with little or no communication between them.

I have now explained the position of affairs, as far as the

relieving Force was concerned, to the date of my leaving Cape Coast for the front, and before proceeding with an account of the operations which led to the relief of Kumassi and the punitive expeditions which followed, I shall explain briefly the causes of the rebellion and the doings of the Force besieged in Kumassi up to this same date.

CHAPTER XVI

1900

STATE OF AFFAIRS IN ASHANTI—THE SIEGE OF KUMASSI

AFTER the expedition of 1895–6, a British Resident was installed in Kumassi; a strong Fort had been built, and a garrison, supposed to consist of three hundred men of the Gold Coast Constabulary, was posted in it. From various causes this number was allowed to dwindle down considerably, and in 1900 it was insufficient to afford that protection so necessary in a newly acquired country, inhabited by a truculent race, to whom fighting in any form has always been an essential of existence.

Our policy was to prevent the Kumassis assuming a lordship over the other neighbouring tribes, and to open trade routes in every direction, thus ensuring the safety of traders, and at the same time offering a field for their labours to the dominant tribes in some direction other than incessant internecine war.

The intentions were good; it was in the execution that the local Government had failed. It is of small use with a savage, warlike people to lay down laws and build forts, if the power to enforce such laws is insufficient and the forts are undergarrisoned; in fact, the latter consideration practically governs the former. With people who have not yet emerged from barbarism, the only law, until such time as you can educate them to a higher state of reasoning, is force. The Ashantis had been the gainers by our policy. They paid no taxes, as it was not considered right to call on them to do so until some few years of our occupation had elapsed. They were supposed to furnish labour on payment for public works and for certain necessary purposes, such as

the transport of troops or Government stores. They did furnish carriers occasionally, but seldom without protest, and always most unwillingly. It is not, however, correct to say, as has often been stated, that except for a few details of this kind the people had shown no unrest prior to the arrival of Governor Sir Frederic Hodgson at Kumassi, in March, 1900. After the final occupation of Kumassi in July, 1900, I had ample opportunities of conversing with both prisoners and surrendered Chiefs, who then had more to lose than gain by volunteering statements. From these it was plain that trouble had long been brewing, and that it was only a matter of time when the storm should burst. Sir Frederic Hodgson has himself furnished ample proofs of this, which may be found in Report No. 79 and its enclosures, issued in March, 1901, with the Blue Book, "Gold Coast Correspondence relating to the Ashanti War, 1900, presented to both Houses of Parliament."

A strong proof that the Governor was unwittingly marching into a hornet's nest was furnished by a document found by me amongst the papers of the King of Kokofu. It was from the Acting Resident in Kumassi, dated 20th November, 1899, or only four months prior to Sir Frederic Hodgson's arrival there, and informed the King that there was a talk of an attack on Kumassi, and asking him, in case of it taking place, to move speedily to that town with all his troops to assist the British Government, and meantime to send spies into the Achuma country and report what was going on there. The Governor has stated plainly that he had not been warned of any possibility of a rising or organised ill feeling, and under these circumstances he was undoubtedly placed in a most awkward and serious position, and one it was difficult to get out of, once he had actually arrived in the Ashanti country.

This, shortly, was the situation, when on the 25th March, 1900, Sir Frederic Hodgson, Governor and Commander-in-Chief of the Gold Coast Colony, arrived at Kumassi. His business was connected with Ashanti affairs in general, but more especially with regard to the payment of interest on

the sum due to the British Government, in accordance with the terms of the Treaty of Fomena made by Sir Garnet Wolseley, and also in connection with the expenses incurred during the expedition of 1895-6. At a public Durbar the leading Kings and Chiefs were informed of the object of the Governor's visit, and also plainly told that there could be no question of the restoration of Prempeh, their former ruler (at this time a prisoner at Sierra Leone), as the Queen of England was now the paramount power. Finally, they were given to understand that the golden stool, the great emblem of Ashanti sovereignty, must be surrendered.

As to calling on the chiefs to pay fines, imposed so many years previously, and which had never been regularly paid, or to subscribe towards the expenses of an expedition to which they had offered no kind of resistance, it is not for me to say anything; but undoubtedly it was right to inform them of the impossibility of their ever getting back their deposed King. As to the golden stool, it is only necessary to repeat what I said before, and that is, never demand from or even suggest anything to West Africans unless you have behind you the power to enforce it, in case they should not feel inclined to fall in with your views. It was, in my opinion, not so much the demand which roused the people, though that undoubtedly had a great deal to do with it, as the failure to carry it out at once. It was the spark which alone was needed to fire the train, and that done, even the well-disposed rushed madly to arms—some from hate of the white man, some from fear of their neighbours, some from sheer love of fighting, but all from a desire to shake off the irksome yoke of civilisation, the blessings of which they entirely failed to appreciate, and had no desire to have thrust on them.

Who can but sympathise with them? I for one certainly do; and were it not for their inherent bloodthirstiness, treachery, and cruelty, they might have received much lighter punishment than they did. As it was it became necessary, as the campaign progressed, to teach them a lesson they might remember. In this connection I well

remember the Bekwai King saying to me, before the first execution of an Ashanti took place, that the people felt sure the man would be pardoned by the British Government, as we were so soft-hearted. Not a bad story for such as accuse us of treating our African subjects like slaves; however, the people were deceived on this occasion, and the criminal paid the penalty.

There appears to have been a belief in the minds of all in Kumassi that the mere presence of a few Constabulary soldiers under a white officer would prove sufficient to overawe any number of Ashantis. Fatal error that cost us dear indeed. There can be no other explanation; for from the very first small parties were sent out time after time, each failing in its object, notwithstanding the gallantry of the officers and frequently of the rank and file. The lessons of 1874 had been forgotten; men who had faced Highlanders, Riflemen, Fusiliers, and Bluejackets at Amoaful were now supposed to run at the sight of a few score of black soldiers.

The die was cast, and Sir Frederic Hodgson prepared to carry out his threat regarding the golden stool. One can sympathise with him in his position. He was the representative of the Queen; he had made a public declaration, and as a white man he did not mean to withdraw. He issued orders for a small Column to proceed to two villages named N'Kwanta and Bali, collect any arms and ammunition that could be found, and, if possible, secure the golden stool, the hiding-place of which a spy professed to be able to point out. Could he have seen and studied a letter, now in my possession, written on the same day as the Column started, and afterwards picked up by our troops after the action of Ojesu, he might have hesitated, and possibly saved the rebellion actually breaking out until he could receive reinforcements. This letter was from the missionary, Mr. Ramseyer, then in Kumassi, to a friend, in which he plainly stated that the move of the Hausas on Bali would end in a rebellion in Ashanti.

On the 31st March Captain Armitage, D.S.O., South Wales Borderers, Private Secretary and A.D.C. to Sir

Frederic Hodgson, left Kumassi with forty-five men under command of Captain Leggett, Gold Coast Constabulary, in search of the golden stool of Ashanti and the late King Prempeh's treasure. N'Kwanta was reached, surprised, and surrounded at dawn next morning, but a diligent search revealed nothing; three hours later the small Column entered Bali, but only with the same results. The third day out, leaving Leggett with a guard of fifteen men in Bali, Armitage with the remainder moved into the dense forest, guided by the boy who professed to know the hiding-place of the stool. After hours spent in useless labour the Column retraced its steps, and arrived back at Bali about three p.m. Within half an hour the combined party was attacked and fired on from every direction; both officers were wounded, together with many men. Armitage writes, "The native dispenser made several ineffectual attempts to extract the slug, which caused me some pain," but humorously adds, "I had, however, the satisfaction of seeing the battered remains of my table brought back in triumph by the Hausas." All through the evening the small band was fired into. The night passed, and at dawn began a retreat towards Kumassi; attacked all along their route, and hampered by the terrified carriers, who threw away all their loads, they reached the River Offin, here four feet deep. With a few volleys and a rush the passage was secured, a Chief being left dead on the banks by the terror-stricken piquet told off to guard it.

Casualties were accumulating fast. Near the village of Atchiassi a determined attack was made on the column, and every man of the advance-guard, with the exception of Armitage and his orderly, was wounded, whilst in the rear-guard another man was killed and several carriers hit. The march, however, continued until within three miles of Kumassi, when it became impossible to move any further, owing to exhaustion and the number of casualties. The small party was by this time completely surrounded by the enemy, and without food or water; the cries of the wounded appealing for something to drink, and the thought of what the morrow might bring forth, kept all awake until another dawn warned

them to be moving, if they would make one more effort for life. Armitage saw it was no use attempting to march with his wounded, and quickly made a desperate resolve. Keeping only three rounds a man with him, he distributed all the remaining ammunition amongst ten picked men, and placing these under command of Leggett, asked him to reach Kumassi, if possible, and give them warning of his plight. It is not difficult to imagine the handshake of these two Englishmen as they parted, each believing it to be his last. Fortune, however, favoured Leggett; he reached Kumassi, and help arrived, and with it the surgeon. Armitage was laid up with his wounds for some time. Thus began the fighting which was to continue for six long months, before the Ashantis learnt that they might gain partial local successes, but must eventually once again acknowledge the superiority of the white man.

In the chapter that later on describes the sharp fighting which took place round Kumassi after its relief, will be found a map, showing the numerous stockades erected by the enemy, barring every road leading to the Fort. In order, however, that the general lie of the surrounding country and the situation of the besieged may be better understood, I will shortly explain. Kumassi Fort had been built on part of the old site of the capital; speaking roughly, about one thousand yards of jungle to the south and north-west, and rather less to the east and west, had been entirely cleared, whilst beyond that in every direction extends the endless forest, broken only here and there by open farms and villages. No less than ten roads or tracks converge on Kumassi, all from more or less important centres, and on every side, except towards the north, marshy land or bogs are found. In the centre of the open space on rising ground stands the Fort, which was erected on the advice of Sir William Maxwell, Governor of the Gold Coast, after Sir Francis Scott's expedition of 1895–6. Fortunately for the besieged garrison his prescience had been the means by which alone they were now enabled to ward off the enemy, for the strength of the Fort was in itself sufficient to ensure its safety against any

possible combination, provided, of course, that a sufficient garrison with food supplies was quartered therein. It is most solidly built of stone, square in shape, and flanked at its four corners by circular turrets. The only entrance is by a steel door. The walls are some thirteen feet in height, and loopholed. Above the entrance gateway are officers' quarters, and over those again a single large room, which after the relief served every kind of purpose, and was an officers' barrack as well.

Store-rooms, ammunition-chambers, and many quite modern improvements make it the best defensive Post I saw in West Africa. In fact nothing astonished me more during my three years in that country than the first sight of this Fort, standing out boldly in a wide, open space, which, after emerging from the dark, gloomy forest, appeared to me much as the Crystal Palace might to a prisoner released from a dark cell. Five machine guns and four 7-pounders constituted the armament, whilst inside the walls was a well, which, I believe, had never been known to run dry. This was the spot round which was assembled an Ashanti army, variously computed at between twenty and thirty thousand men, but which probably, as distinct from the rebels in other parts of the country, never numbered over fifteen thousand.

Between the date of Captain Armitage's return from his fruitless search for the golden stool and the 11th April the rising had assumed a serious aspect, and Governor Hodgson had not only telegraphed for reinforcements from the Gold Coast, but from other West African colonies as well. Sierra Leone, Lagos, and Nigeria each sent their quota. In addition he despatched urgent messages to the Northern Territories of the Colony, *viâ* Kintampo, which is itself about one hundred miles north of Kumassi, asking for as much help as it was possible to send.

The telegrams and other reports from Kumassi, in the light of our after knowledge, read strangely. One day a cable to Lugard asks for troops, but adds, "There is plenty of ammunition, ball ·303, here," and this is again cancelled next day and eighty thousand rounds are asked for. It was

not long after this message got out of Kumassi that the cordon closed round its walls. I might multiply indefinitely the statements which led us in the relief Column to assign anything but the true cause to the real dangers with which Kumassi was threatened. Rumour (and that was all one had to work on) stated that the losses in action had been so heavy that there were insufficient men to man the walls, and I feared this might possibly have some truth in it; but then we did not know outside that a large reinforcement had arrived under Major Morris from the north, which had raised the strength so as to make it almost equal to that of the Column which was to effect the relief, and to keep open the Lines of communication in addition.

It would, however, be unfair to Sir Frederic Hodgson and his officers to imagine for a moment that he was not putting the case as plainly and succinctly as lay in his power to do. There is no shadow of doubt on this point. The truth is that the Governor was in a real tight corner, and was doing all a man could to repair the mischief.

On the 18th April four officers and one hundred and seven men arrived in Kumassi from the Gold Coast; they were not molested *en route*, thus proving that even on that date the rebellion was not universal. Five days later a Column, consisting of three officers and one hundred men, under command of Captain Marshall, Royal West Kent Regiment, which had been sent out to destroy a place called Kwanam, was assailed on all sides, a Native officer and four men were killed, all the British officers and fifty rank and file were wounded, and the Column was obliged to return without effecting its object. On this occasion Dr. Hay of the Gold Coast Medical Service behaved most gallantly, tending native officer Accere under a heavy fire, during which time he himself was shot in the head. This Native officer was lying between the enemy and the Column, and had Dr. Hay been a military officer he would doubtless have been given some signal reward for his bravery.

On the 25th of April the cordon of the enemy was at last complete, and the two missionaries, Mr. and Mrs. Ramseyer,

with four others, and two gentlemen of the Ashanti Trading Company, were ordered into the Fort from the outlying houses. Hardly was this done when the Ashantis, at last thoroughly roused, and probably feeling assured of a day of real vengeance on the white man, came on in masses to the attack. So sudden, unexpected, and determined was their advance that the outposts at Bantama, a few hundred yards north of Kumassi, were at once withdrawn, and even the Hausa cantonment, only six hundred yards from the fort, was abandoned; the prison doors were opened and the prisoners released, and, in short, the offensive had for the first time passed into the defensive. It was no longer a case of attacking the enemy, but of defending the Fort. Twenty of our allies were killed and several wounded, two soldiers were also killed, and Captain Leggett was again hit. And now order was suddenly changed into chaos, and a pandemonium was let loose. The Fanti civilian traders and others, the wives of our own soldiers, and several thousand inhabitants of the town rushed madly for the Fort gates in order to gain admittance before the dreaded Ashantis might close on them. After a severe struggle the gates were closed, but not before Captain Middlemist of the Gold Coast Constabulary had been very badly crushed, borne onward by the terrified crowd. His severe injuries brought on an illness which hastened his death.

Those who have not seen a panic-stricken African crowd cannot possibly imagine what it must have been like. No room for sentiment here! With brutish ferocity, each man, woman, and child thought but of themselves, perish all the rest, so long as one could find safety. Well might Sir Frederic Hodgson write, "It was a most anxious time." Yes, indeed! especially for those brave ladies, foremost amongst whom in hours of distress was Lady Hodgson. I have been assured by many native soldiers who took part in the siege that nothing could exceed her calm unselfishness in danger, and I am more than pleased to be able to record it here.

One misfortune followed another, for the surging mass of

humanity outside the walls absolutely crushed out the last semblance of order, and the hospital, which stood some four hundred yards to the north of the fort, as well as the solid and comfortable European bungalows, were abandoned to the greed and mercilessness of the enemy, and were soon despoiled of everything. The Governor in his despatch says, "The scene around the Fort on the night of the 25th April baffles description." It must, indeed, have done so, for huddled round the fort in a state of abject panic lay three thousand men, women, and children, surrounded by a cordon of soldiers. The lurid light from the burning houses in cantonments cast a ghastly light over the pitiful scene. The cries of women and children rose appealingly to those who must perforce remain inside and hold the fort at all costs, whilst, as if in mockery, wafted on the breeze came ever and anon the hideous booming of the enemy's war drums, exulting in their temporary triumphs. As if not content with such dire misery, a higher power decreed that the windows of heaven should be opened, and the rain came down in torrents, turning hope into despair and sorrow into blank dismay.

> "I would not spend another such a night
> Though 'twere to buy a world of happy days."

Three days passed, and the Ashantis, being aware of the approach of a Column from Cape Coast under Captain Aplin of the Lagos Constabulary, determined once again to attempt the capture of the Fort before its arrival, and at noon commenced a heavy fire from the now loopholed European quarters and hospital. The 7-pounders opened on the prison buildings and fighting became general. The officers' quarters were cleared of the enemy with a rush by some Hausas, who, following up their success, and well backed by some friendly levies, recaptured the Basel Mission buildings before again returning to the Fort.

Meantime one of those scenes of carnage which blot almost every campaign was occurring near the Fort. Into a store-room had crowded a large number of the enemy, who had suddenly found themselves cut off from their own people.

They were discovered by the Hausas, who, dashing in, soon hacked them to bits, making a very shambles of the place. You cannot all at once train African natives to ideas of humanity. The deed under the circumstances was in their eyes perfectly justifiable. Our losses amounted to two men killed and one British officer and ten men wounded out of a total of two hundred engaged.

Another severe lesson had been administered to the enemy, as they left one hundred and thirty dead on the field; but the unpleasant fact had been plainly demonstrated that the Gold Coast troops could not be controlled without the greatest difficulty; their dash was all that could be desired, but their fire discipline was nil. It was this that was chiefly responsible for the shortage of ammunition that eventually tied the hands of the officers, and it was by no means confined to Kumassi. In the relief Column, when operations first commenced, the foolish waste of ammunition was almost incredible to those who had not before served with African recruits. It was practically impossible to replenish the supply, so reckless were the men, and nothing but the incessant watchfulness of their officers, and not infrequently the use of a thick stick, could stop it. Later on, as the men gained experience, they became much more amenable, and at the end of the campaign preferred a bayonet charge to needless firing.

About half-past five, after the Ashantis had been repulsed on every side, the welcome sound of firing on the Cape Coast road reached the ears of the garrison, and shortly after the Column of Lagos troops, under command of Captain Aplin, emerged from the forest and marched up to the Fort.

I must shortly relate the story of the march of these troops from Cape Coast to Kumassi. It is a stirring one, not only on account of its relation to contemporaneous events, but as showing the sterling fighting qualities possessed by the British officer. I know the exact details of the fighting and the spots where it took place, and there can be no sort of doubt that, but for the devotion of the officers and their disregard for danger, the entire Column would have been destroyed and never heard of again. The Lagos Con-

stabulary at that time laboured under serious disadvantages; years of ill training, owing to paucity of white men and consequent lack of supervision, had allowed the Force to degenerate to such a degree that it possessed little real military discipline. Many of the men were physically unfit for active service, and *esprit de corps* among the rank and file was conspicuous by its absence. Fortunately for Lagos, and other West African colonies as well, that recently much-abused individual, the British officer, was there to make up for other deficiencies, and with all his implied want of knowledge, there was nothing else in the world that could be found to replace him.

Aplin, who with five European officers, two Native officers, two hundred and fifty men, one 7-pounder gun, and two Maxims, had been summoned by telegram from Lagos to move to the relief of Kumassi, left Lagos on the 16th and disembarked at Cape Coast on the 19th April. Moving northwards he crossed the River Prah on the 25th, and arrived at Esumeja, twenty miles from Kumassi, unopposed, on the 27th. On the 28th he left for Kumassi, and at midday his Column was attacked. The very first shot fired was at him and reached its mark, also wounding his orderly. This was the sign for a tremendous fusillade, which rained on the main body from all directions. Apparently there were no scouts extended on either side of the path, and the enemy had it all their own way. For twenty minutes it was breech-loader and Maxim versus savage numbers, and the former prevailed. Once again the Column moves on, but after covering five hundred yards the bush is alive with the enemy and the duel recommences. Presently a village appears in sight, the bayonet does its work; a wild hurrah, and the village is ours. Four of the six officers are wounded together with seventeen rank and file, whilst three men have paid for the day with their lives.

Next morning the advance was continued; but where were the scouts who might have saved the catastrophe which well-nigh marked this day? They were not sent out! There must have been reasons; the most probable was that scout-

ing in such apparently impenetrable bush had not been resorted to in such fighting as these particular troops had taken part in; and secondly, for proper scouting with West Africans you need plenty of white men to lead the way. Without these it would have been useless to ask troops, of the description of the Lagos Hausas, at any rate, to advance against the Ashantis. When within three miles of Kumassi the enemy changed their tactics of the previous day, and assailed the rear-guard; slowly the firing ran along the Column until all portions of it were engaged, but still the advance continued, until a strong stockade appeared, barring the road, and stopped further progress.

Kumassi was within reach; an hour would see it reinforced; the enemy must needs look quick if he would prevent it now. The 7-pounder gun is run up and pours in round after round, but without effect; whilst the gunners are falling fast, all men who can be spared from the rear-guard double to the front, and, led by Captain Read, a charge is made on the stockade; but the gallant officer falls, wounded in no less than five places, with his right arm shattered. The men have taken their share of wounds, but now refuse to advance any further, and the stockade still continues its fire. The gun ammunition was found at this stage to be exhausted, and stones and rubble were used as projectiles. The Maxims had become red-hot and finally jammed, and the situation must have appeared desperate indeed, for with thousands of foes all round, and one hundred and fifty casualties in its own ranks, the shattered Column appeared absolutely helpless.

And now at last was done what should have been done at the very first: a party was sent into the dense scrub to take the enemy in flank. Led by Captain Cochrane, who was suffering from a severe wound in the shoulder, they managed to get almost in rear of the stockade and poured in volleys; the frontal attack at the same time charged with the bayonet, and the savage warriors took safety in flight. The fight was over, but every British officer had received a wound; five non-commissioned officers and men had been killed and one

hundred and thirty-nine wounded. Many of these wounds were only slight, but they were proof of the heaviness of the enemy's fire; and, of course, had these been better armed and led, not only would this Column never have reached its destination, but the relief of Kumassi would have been an impossibility. Considering that they were fighting with black soldiers alone, it often appears to me extraordinary how they ever carried through the campaign against such heavy odds as they had to face.

Kumassi had thus once more been reinforced in numbers, but that was all. Nine thousand rounds was the total amount of ammunition brought in by this Column; the remainder had been fired away or lost in the bush, and for the first time, to my knowledge, in West African warfare, a 7-pounder gun had been abandoned and carried off by the enemy. If this was to be the result of sending immediate relief to the besieged Fort, I cannot but rejoice that I preferred the course of refusing to rush headlong, unprovided with ammunition or food, merely to add to the starving numbers, and without possibility of damaging the enemy. No one probably now realises better than Sir Frederic Hodgson himself the advantages of this course. Not that I refer in any way to Captain Aplin, the officer in command of the Lagos Column; he had his distinct orders, which he was bound to carry out without questioning them, while I had to act on my own responsibility.

Early in May food supplies were beginning to run so short that difficulty was found in feeding the thousands of refugees who had taken shelter under and all round the Fort walls. Starvation and sickness were taking heavy toll, and the misery that was to come later was already plainly foreshadowed. The expedient of asking for an armistice was resorted to, during which time it was hoped some kind of temporary terms might be arranged which would at least allow supplies to be replenished. Matters have come to a serious pass when the white man asks for an armistice from Africans. However, to the credit of our enemies it must be said, an armistice was agreed to, and food had actually been

brought in, when everything was all at once again changed by the boom of a gun, followed shortly by yet another relief Column, which entered the clearing from the north-east. This time it was Major Morris, D.S.O., Royal Irish Regiment, who had marched three hundred and forty miles from the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast in obedience to Sir Frederic Hodgson's summons, sent on the 10th April, as has previously been related. Whatever else went wrong during those troublous days, it certainly cannot be said that any order or appeal sent or made by the Governor was not promptly obeyed. This was the third reinforcement which he had received since the attempt on the golden stool took place.

Major Morris's Column consisted of seven British officers, two hundred and thirty rank and file of the Northern Territories Battalion, one 7-pounder, and one Maxim gun. Marching on an average eighteen miles a day they reached Kintampo (which is one hundred miles to the north of Kumassi) in thirteen days, having covered two hundred and thirty-eight miles. Leaving Kintampo on the 9th May, Morris engaged small bodies of Ashantis on the 11th and 14th, in each case defeating them and capturing cattle and sheep. Towns and villages which offered resistance were destroyed and the crops cut down. On the 15th May the enemy, adopting their usual tactics, took up a position, backed by a stockade on the main road, and attempted to prevent him getting into Kumassi. After an hour's firing Morris rushed the stockade, which he carried with the bayonet, himself receiving a severe wound at the close of the fight. His total casualties consisted of three levies killed, and sixteen of his own battalion and sixteen levies wounded. He arrived at Kumassi the same evening, considerably augmenting the strength of the besieged garrison. Major Morris's march was a very fine performance, which only those who have attempted similar feats in such lands can in any way appreciate.

Morris's arrival was the signal for renewing operations against the enemy, who were by this time laying regular

siege to Kumassi, and had a perfect network of well-built stockades completely hemming in the fort, and just out of effective range of the 7-pounder guns. On the 20th May a Column consisting of twelve officers, three hundred and thirty soldiers, and three hundred Levies, sallied out and attacked two stockades in the direction of the Mampon road, to the south-east of the Fort; both attacks were unsuccessful, but the object in view, viz. the localisation of the enemy's defences and strength in that direction, was in Major Morris's opinion achieved, and the losses were, therefore, worth the attempt. Captain Leggett was severely wounded, and there were twenty-six other casualties.

On the 25th May Captain Cochrane, with a Maxim gun and one hundred and forty men, in accordance with orders, proceeded to attack the enemy's stockade at N'Timida, beyond Bantama. The stockade itself was taken, but the village was held by the enemy, and the men refused to advance in face of the fire which was poured into them. Notwithstanding the efforts of Cochrane (who had so gallantly decided the fate of the day when the Lagos column was wavering before Kumassi) and of Lieutenant Ralph, who was severely wounded whilst leading them, the Lagos troops positively declined to renew the combat, and this attempt also ended in failure, entailing on the garrison a loss of one officer and eleven men *hors de combat.* I have been told by officers who took part in the defence of the Fort that about this time it was generally realised amongst them that the troops were getting utterly demoralised by the succession of failures, shortness of food, and consequent debility, and by the fact that they knew that ammunition, which they so dearly loved to waste, was fast running very low. All these reasons, combined with the fact that a large proportion of the men were inadequately trained, went further towards causing failures than the generally assigned reason of short supply of ammunition alone.

The British officers, however, were determined at all risks to be attempting something, partly to keep up the fighting spirit in their men, partly to assure the enemy that there was

no intention of allowing him to have it all his own way, but chiefly because the eagerly expected relief from Cape Coast showed no signs of coming. Bitter must have been their thoughts, as day after day wore on, but no welcome sound of gun or Maxim boomed or shrieked across that terrible surrounding of endless forest. Yes, indeed, they may well be excused their despair, for defeat in those lands means absolute annihilation, and capture can only have one fiendish end. And to their natural grief at the bare thought of abandoning Kumassi and thus lowering the flag was added the fact that amongst them were several ladies, whose lives were in their hands. Read it as one will, the situation was a melancholy one, and the crowning point of it all was the uncertainty of the behaviour of dejected men in the final hour of trial, which all felt could not be far off. Theirs, however, were not the only anxious minds; in the relieving Column were many who had the same misgivings as to what might happen when the Hausa and the Yoruba met the Ashanti in the final struggle outside the walls of Kumassi. There was no reserve to fall back on; whatever had to be done must be done by black soldiers alone. Come good, come evil, the die was cast, and nothing could alter the facts that stared all in the face.

On the 26th May, Captain Armitage with a selected party attempted a night attack on the Mampon road stockade; but owing to the unwillingness of the men this also proved a failure, and Major Morris felt it necessary to reprimand them severely. It is interesting to note in Captain Armitage's account of the siege that on the 27th May the garrison received all day long apparently trustworthy news of the relief Columns. This news was in detail, and, strange to say, exceedingly correct. Three Columns were reported to be advancing—the first up the Cape Coast Kumassi road, the second through Denkera, which was, in fact, the Levies under Captain Hall of the Gold Coast Police,[1] and the third through Eastern Akim; this last Column was eventually

[1] Not to be confused with Captain Hall, W.A.F.F., who was holding Esumeja and Bekwai.

badly repulsed by the enemy, and its commander, Captain Benson, met his death; but of this more anon. Finally the reports stated that the Adansis on the Line of communication had been defeated. Native rumours are generally exceedingly unreliable, and these were not credited; and yet there are occasions on which a sifting even of West African evidence helps one to correct conclusions. As, for instance, when a report of the escape of nearly the whole garrison of Kumassi reached me in June, first through native sources alone, and we acted on it, as its probability was the most natural thing we could imagine; it turned out to be perfectly correct.

The state of affairs in Kumassi was now becoming desperate; it was no longer a question of ammunition or fighting only, but one of food. The garrison was fast weakening from incessant duty and short rations; the unfortunate refugees, who had once numbered some thousands, were reduced considerably, and were dying of starvation and privation combined. The horrors of a siege in all its most loathsome forms was casting its shadows over those doomed creatures outside the Fort walls, and yet no signs of relief. Rumour was put aside, for not even one authentic word of hope could be got from those who surely must be on their way to save the honour of the flag. No means could be found to convey the news that their countrymen were striving might and main in the dark forests to the south, and were still unable to cross that last narrow belt, or hold out a hand through its cheerless avenues.

Food! was the cry of those wretched followers, and Major Morris decided to attempt once again to procure it. The village of N'Timida was reported to be well stocked with supplies, and with the object of bringing in as much as possible, a force of two hundred and thirty men, one gun, and a Maxim, under Captain Marshall, Royal West Kent Regiment, was detailed to carry out the expedition.

The early dawn of the 29th May was the day selected, and whilst the troops moved out silently to the attack a body of Levies under Captain Armitage were held in reserve close

by, to complete the enemy's discomfiture and then bring in supplies. The stockade was reached, and after a few shots had been fired the officer in command attempted a charge; but the men, though they advanced some twenty yards, were checked, and the assault altogether failed. Marshall was himself wounded, and shortly afterwards Captain Maguire, of the Essex Regiment, was killed whilst directing the gun detachment to remove the 7-pounder. The now almost familiar retirement had to be begun in face of an enemy who was gradually becoming elated with successes and swollen with a not unnatural pride. Once more those gallant white officers bore the brunt of the fight, retiring slowly with faces to the foe, encouraging their weary soldiers, fiercely dispersing an ambuscade, then again turning to bay, until at last they found themselves back once more in that pestilential Fort, beaten, but themselves covered with honour. Two officers and twenty-four men were added to the long roll of casualties written within those four stone walls, on which, notwithstanding the far greater deeds being then wrought south of the equator on the same continent, the eyes of their countrymen were now beginning to be turned; whilst many in England were yearning to get some kind of news of those who also were doing their duty in the hinterlands of West Africa.

The following day the orders announced a further reduction of rations, and two days later Major Morris notes in his diary: "News points to the fact that troops are undoubtedly on their way up here, and close." On June the 10th the same diary notes: "News came in from the Cape Coast road that men were being brought back wounded." A few days later Morris enters in his diary that rockets and star-shells were fired to attract the attention of the relieving Column. From the advanced Post of the relieving Column were at the same time being fired star-shells to cheer the garrison, but the impenetrable character of these forests was to make itself felt to the bitter end, for neither saw the other's signals, and blank despair still kept its grip on Kumassi. On the 22nd June supplies at last came to an end; starvation or surrender

were both equally impossible, and the Governor, driven to desperation, did the only thing that could be done under the circumstances. Leaving three officers and one hundred and twenty men in the Fort, with rations sufficient to last to the 15th July, the remainder made a dash for safety through the enemy's lines. The story of that gruesome march I shall reserve for another chapter.

I have told shortly the story of the siege as I gather it, not only from official records and private diaries, but also as I heard it first hand from those whom it was our good fortune to relieve on the 15th July, 1900, and hence whilst everything was still fresh in their memories. There is much I have not told, much that would only embitter some and do no good to anyone; and although I make no pretence of doing any more than telling my story in my own way, I have been careful to try and avoid contentious matter. Yet if a military operation has to be described, it cannot be done without inquiring into the causes which so frequently led to failure on the part of the actors. Putting aside the events prior to the arrival of Major Morris in Kumassi on the 15th May, let us examine the details of some of the sorties which took place for various purposes. It may at once be assumed that one of the primary objects in each case was the desire to procure a supply of food for the troops and starving refugees. The idea that the actual strength of the garrison, as far as numbers are concerned, was insufficient, I personally dismiss as incorrect; the force was ample for all purposes of defence, and sufficient even for offensive operations, supposing always it had been composed of good material. That it was, however, as a matter of fact, composed largely of young soldiers, many without training, puts a different complexion on the matter, and it is with this aspect I would deal.

Major Morris had found on his march down from the Northern Territories that an attack well driven home was the only successful way of dealing with the enemy, and he, in consequence, determined to employ similar tactics after he assumed command in Kumassi. He did employ them, and they resulted in failure, or, at least, did not prove successful.

He probably knew the cause, and that was that the men were unable, when used in small bodies, to defeat the enemy. Had he, therefore, instead of sending out small Columns one after another, attacked at one point only with every available soldier, he would probably not only have defeated the enemy, but secured large quantities of supplies and thoroughly frightened them. He had the immense advantage of choosing his own point of attack without giving any kind of indication to the enemy. Possessing as he did an impregnable central position in the Fort, he could any day have overcome the enemy by a sudden and resolute attack in force, and been back again in safety before they could assemble in sufficient strength to make a counter attack on him. One good victory would have invigorated the wavering spirits of the men and equally depressed the Ashantis. Again, besides the garrison, there were many hundred loyal Levies in Kumassi; that these did good service is sufficiently proved by the despatches, which over and over again bear witness to their loyalty, and even, on several occasions, to their courage.

A great opportunity was also offered of uniting in each Column the forces from different Colonies, and thus appealing to their racial instincts. The negro of West Africa is quite sensible to such appeals; at least, such has been my own experience. You can often get more out of a corps by reminding it of its tribal origin than you can by any amount of drills and book discipline. It is a form of argument they understand, and it is a good sign for their future efficiency as soldiers. It certainly was one of the strongest levers I was able to use in the Force, which eventually consisted of four thousand men, under my command in Ashanti, and might, I think, have been utilised to great advantage during the siege. As I said before, however, the *morale* of the men had been dangerously impaired, and although one must bear this in mind in criticising any of the operations of the garrison, it only made it all the more necessary to employ large numbers. Morris's task was a very difficult one; he himself was working under great disadvantages and suffering

from a recent severe wound, and there may have been many other reasons unknown to me which obliged him to act as he did. In any case his final dispositions for leaving Kumassi were made with a thoroughness which does him credit.

What, however, has always been to me the most unintelligible point in connection with the siege in its second phase, is the fact that notwithstanding the persistent rumours and native reports that reached the garrison of the approach of a relieving Force, no attempt was made by the greater portion of the garrison which broke out on the 23rd June, to join hands with us. Notwithstanding that they passed within a few miles—all unknown, of course, to us—they marched direct for the coast, when their mere presence, even without detaching a man to join in the actual relief, would have been worth a battalion. I am, however, running into future events.

I will not argue the question as to whether Kumassi might probably have been relieved earlier—that is a matter which those who take the trouble to read the story may decide for themselves; but the leader who undertakes military operations must be on his guard against the temptation to risk, for the sake of his personal ambition, both the reputations of his officers and the lives of his men. I am thankful we discarded such tactics in Ashanti, and even then there were not a few who prophesied we should fail.

CHAPTER XVII

1900

PREPARATIONS FOR ADVANCE—DIFFICULTIES OF TRANSPORT—THE START—ADVANCE TO AKROFU—PRAHSU—NEWS OF COLONEL CARTER'S REVERSE AT DOMPOASSI—DIFFICULTIES OF ADVANCE—NEWS FROM SIR F. HODGSON

WHILST Kumassi was thus beset and girt in by innumerable foes, the driblets constituting the relief column were each and all in almost equally dire straits. I have already explained how they were scattered in small detachments along the Line of communications; but when it is added that their food supplies were at the lowest possible ebb, and all were asking for ammunition, which had not then arrived in the country, it will be understood how vain was the hope of those in the Fort who expected immediate relief. As further instance of our difficulties, the seemingly authentic reports received at the Base were anything but encouraging.

On the 28th May a written account of the death of Captain Slater at Kwissa reached me, and it was added that most of his men had shared his fate; this meant that this important post on the Line of communications had been occupied by the enemy. A later report gave full details of the disaster. Both turned out eventually to be untrue, but it made it impossible thereafter to trust to anything but the statements of European eye-witnesses.

On this same day a gentleman at Cape Coast, Mr. H. Russell, a trader of whom I had heard a good deal, and who had considerable experience of the Gold Coast, came and offered his services to me in any capacity. I was only too glad to accept them, and offered him the post of Private Secretary, an appointment which was at once approved by

the Secretary of State; he proved most valuable. His knowledge of the country and language and his untiring energy were godsends in those days, and he accompanied me to Kumassi. For his services he received the C.M.G. at the close of the campaign, and it was well deserved. On the 30th May Commander Laird, of H.M.S. *Magpie,* which had just arrived in the roads, called and offered to remain off Cape Coast temporarily. The presence of this ship was a guarantee to the natives that no harm would befall them, and it was very necessary, as by this time many of them were beginning to think an Ashanti army was on its way to the seacoast, and if rumour could have been believed they had some ground for their fears.

Of all our difficulties at this time the chief was the scarcity of carriers. As already stated, the cowardly Fantis and other local natives, with few exceptions, would do no work; more than half of such small gangs as could be collected consisted of women and young girls. The start of a convoy in those days was a quaint sight, for each carrier had to be given a load suitable to his or her age and strength; consequently it meant an eternal re-sorting of loads; a strong man (of whom there were very few indeed) would take sixty pounds, whereas a young child could only manage ten pounds. Anyone who has ever had experience of Transport on Field service will readily grasp the maddening difficulty of getting any work done under such circumstances; and the patient manner in which both officers and British non-commissioned officers performed their tasks was an object-lesson in discipline. Slowly, but steadily, small batches of volunteers or compulsory carriers left Cape Coast for the Prah, bearing those precious loads of rice, without which all movement was impossible. I remember well watching them pass my door and feeling that bags of silver were being conveyed to the front; and at this time they were certainly worth more than their weight of the precious metal to those who could get no relief until a sufficient number of these had been collected on the Line of communications.

The telegraphic communication between Cape Coast and



ON THE ROAD TO KUMASSI

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the River Prah was so bad that messages often occupied two days in coming over seventy miles of wire. The constant storms and wind either knocked down the posts or brought down great trees, which snapped the line or blocked it temporarily, and the demoralisation which had seized the natives found its place also amongst the subordinate staff. It was only after largely increasing the numbers of the latter, and punishing severely all cases of gross negligence, that the wire was got into fairly good order. The Europeans mostly worked with a will, and extra runners were placed all along the road to carry messages or effect repairs.

On the last day of May I received a telegram from Prahsu, which post was seventy-one miles from Cape Coast, to the effect that it was reported that the garrison of Kumassi had broken out and were on their way to the coast; also that Captain Hall from Esumeja had reached Kumassi on the 26th instant. Putting one thing with another, the only conclusion to be arrived at was that Hall had joined the Governor and both were on their way south. I thought it over for some time, and then made up my mind that it was false, which conclusion turned out correct; and after that date I was little troubled by rumours, but looked on them as one of the necessary evils a Commander must endure and then dismiss from his mind.

June was ushered in by the arrival of three hundred of the West African Frontier Force from Nigeria, under command of Major Melliss, Indian Staff Corps, and Major Beddoes, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, about both of whom I shall have much to say; and as I watched the troops march past the temporary barracks in the town I felt years younger, for I now knew I had some of my own original men near me, and it was a joyous sight to watch their heavy, honest faces, as they recognised me and acknowledged my welcome, calling out in their childish way, "Bam Baturi," or in other words, "It is the big white man." They were of an alien race it is true, but I could have gripped their horny hands with as much pleasure as ever I did a white man's, and, truth to say, after they had been dismissed I did exchange many a hand-

shake with them as I walked about listening to the tales they had to tell of their first voyage across the big, black sea. One had eaten ice, another had drunk sea water by mistake, a third had tasted nothing since they started; but all had made up their minds to fight for the Great White Queen. One man had been given a lump of ice by his officer, and had carefully wrapped it up in a handkerchief and locked it in his bag. On going to have another look at his novel present he discovered naturally that it had melted. Not understanding the cause of so curious a phenomenon, he promptly went to the officer and reported that some man had "thiefed" (stolen) his ice. He was immensely amused when the matter was explained to him. Simple fellows! and yet how much honest human nature was there under the surface; it did one good to witness it.

Lieutenant McClintock, R.E., arrived from Nigeria on 3rd of June, and I appointed him Deputy-Assistant Adjutant-General; he had no previous experience of Staff duties, but with that fertility of resource possessed so largely by British officers, he was soon at work in the best of all schools, viz. practical experience. By this date Lieutenant-Colonel Carter with his reinforcements from Cape Coast had joined Wilkinson, and both were concentrated at Fumsu, seventeen miles north of the Prah and fifty-seven south of Kumassi. The combined Column was to start north on the 4th of June.

On the 5th June, with eight officers and British non-commissioned officers and three hundred men, I left Cape Coast for Kumassi. We had to do the best we could with the small number of carriers at our disposal, and even as Commander I was obliged to share a hammock with one of my Staff. I must own, however, he made but little use of it, and I practically had one to myself after the first two marches. For this I was thankful, as my injured leg was still in a splint, and I was much too weak to walk all day in an African sun. It was a fiercely hot day without a breath of air, and we all laughed at the idea of our bedraggled party being the headquarters of a Field Force. We might have made a fitting subject for a committee on the reduction of unnecessary

impedimenta in the field ; and even a few precious books which I had brought with me had to be left behind, as I could not muster another carrier. I parted most reluctantly with them, but as it turned out I did not miss them much, for it was many a long month before I again found time to devote to ordinary reading. As we marched through the almost deserted streets of Cape Coast town it was not difficult to understand the feelings of its inhabitants; they evidently looked on the attempt to stamp out the rebellion with black troops alone as a farce; not a voice was raised to cheer the men, not an attempt to encourage any of us in our task, in fact many had almost told me we were going on a fool's errand. It was, however, a very different story when seven months later we marched back through the town, and thousands turned out to acclaim the same victorious soldiers.

On arrival at Akrofu, our first halt, fourteen miles from Cape Coast, the rain came down in torrents, and we began our experiences of a campaign during the wet season in Ashanti. Before the rear-guard was in the village darkness had set in, the streets were turned into watercourses, and everything was literally soaked. The bags of rice had no waterproof coverings, and all of us were wet through; but the rain continued, and the only means of moving about was to wait for the constant flashes of lightning. Similar nights we passed in plenty, but that was when we had become so case-hardened that no freak of nature would in any way have astonished us. This, however, was the first night of all, before the men had shaken down to the peculiar form of service that was to be our lot, and when officers still believed that it was necessary to have a mouthful of food and to remove their sodden garments before turning into a clammy, damp hut for a few hours of rest. The description is not an exaggeration. I have seen discomfort on service in probably every conceivable form, but whatever I had seen before very soon came back to memory only as a happy reminiscence of positive comfort in comparison with our present position.

My first interview with a Gold Coast Chief took place in that village, and it was amusing enough to relate here.

This man had come some fifteen miles south to report to me that some of our soldiers in passing through his village had robbed the inhabitants and had refused to pay for anything. I did not altogether doubt his story, but at the same time I endeavoured to explain to him the peculiar circumstances in which we were placed, and that there were very few British officers to look after the men. I assured him he would receive compensation for any proved losses, and that I would personally inquire into the case on arrival in his village. He informed me that all his doors had been torn from their hinges to provide firewood, and his thatch had been removed for bedding. Next day, on arrival at his village, I found the whole story was a pure invention; his houses were securely locked, and nothing whatever had been touched. The chief, meantime, had made himself scarce; but I had no intention of letting him off scot-free, and so leaving a few men in ambush, I moved on. On his arrival in the village after my rear-guard had passed, he was promptly seized and brought on to my next camp, when all he had to say was that I was his good father, and I accordingly treated him as a good father does an erring child. On my return from Kumassi seven months later he came and made his obeisance, but on this occasion he honoured me by adding to my titles the somewhat expressive one of "Devilish fine fellow."

At Akrofu I slept in the hut of a native missionary. He and his wife turned out of their room and insisted on my occupying it; they got me some tea, and were most obliging. I was able in return later on to send them news of a relation who was supposed to have fallen into the hands of the Ashantis, but who I was glad to find had escaped. At midnight a message arrived from Captain Hall at Esumeja stating that a convoy of his had been attacked, five soldiers had been killed, many carriers wounded, and seventy were missing. Unpleasant news for the first day's march! Next morning we moved on to Mansu, about twenty miles; the weather was very bad, and we were constantly having to wade through deep bog and slush. On arrival in camp I received further news from Hall at Esumeja that his rations

were almost exhausted, and his ammunition very low indeed. Another despatch informed me that Lieutenant-Colonel Carter had also been opposed on his march, and lost four killed and eight wounded. This last report was signed by Major Cramer, who was also north of the Prah; but it was almost impossible at that time to understand the situation, or how the different officers had reached the stages they wrote from. On the 8th June we arrived at the River Prah, the boundary proper between Ashanti and the lower Gold Coast colony.

Prahsu, as this stage was called, was at that time a kind of harbour of refuge; it was at the end of all semblance of civilisation, and became hereafter the advanced Base of operations. It was on the south or left bank of the Prah, and was therefore safe from surprise by the enemy. The daily increasing camp consisted of a rest house, which answered as headquarters office, hospital, ammunition store, supply depôt, post and telegraph office, and, in short, all and every purpose; it was situated on the bank of the river, which at high flood reached to within a foot of the plinth. The grass when I arrived was growing right up to the verandah, the jungle was thick, rank, and unwholesome, the atmosphere was reeking with malaria, and immense virgin forest reached to the water's edge north, east, and west; whilst to the south were signs of what might once have been open farms, but now bamboos and vegetation enclosed the whole place in an impenetrable screen.

The general air of depression presented by this uninviting place, once experienced, was not easily cast off. There were three upper-story rooms, one of which was being used as a European hospital; a second was crammed full of the camp beds, kit, cooking-pots, and belongings of some eight officers; whilst the third became the office and dwelling-house of the Staff. The lower rooms were so packed with human beings, stores, etc., that it was almost impossible to move about. All round the house were hospital tents, ambulance hammocks, rice bags piled on bamboo stands, and a hundred other articles required on active service. The

whole place was a perfect pandemonium, and the sanitary arrangements were nil. It was an Augean stable, and although we could not emulate Hercules by utilising the waters of the Prah as he had done those of the Alpheus, yet everyone was set to work, and within a week order was established; grass huts rose on all sides, clearings were made in the forests, and a small-pox hospital was erected, as this curse of West Africa had already taken root amongst the followers. Close by the camp was the old European burying-ground, sad reminder of two past expeditions; this was cleared and made tidy.

It was not a little surprising to find that notwithstanding Kumassi had been cut off for a long time past from all communication, yet but little attempt had been made to open up even the camps south of the Prah. There were practically no huts, no workmen, and no tools; everything had been left to chance, and no one seemed to be at all in a hurry to aid the advance of the troops; indeed, a traveller as far as Prahsu might well have thought he was in a strange land where the white man had only just arrived for the first time. The river was in high flood, and the only means of crossing it consisted of one small ferry-boat; yet it had never seemed to strike any official that so precarious a means of keeping up the communications of a large Force was totally inadequate.

At Prashu I was only seventy-four miles from Kumassi, whilst between me and that place was Captain Hall holding Esumeja and Bekwai as advanced outposts. Further to his south Colonels Carter and Wilkinson had united their Columns, and with eleven Europeans, three hundred and eighty men, one 7-pounder, and a Maxim gun, had advanced from Kwissa to effect a junction with Hall. This, once accomplished, was to have been followed, if possible, by an attempt to open communication with the Kumassi garrison, or in any case to inform them that help was close at hand. Reading my diary of this time I find several entries, "Sent off another messenger with promises of twenty (forty, and up to one hundred) pounds sterling reward and a

letter for the Governor in Kumassi." I sometimes wonder why none of these ever got into the Fort; two I believe were certainly killed, but as I sent no less than ten messages at different times, one at least might have got in, and it only shows how close must have been the watch kept up by the enemy. One man actually returned and stated he had been in and interviewed an officer, but he could not account for his receiving no reply, and he probably lost heart and never really got near Kumassi.

At Prahsu itself I had but two hundred and fifty men, the total reserve then available; but neither food nor ammunition had arrived, nor had the Sierra Leone carriers even landed on the coast. Until all the above could be collected in sufficient quantities to make an advance either possible or useful, I determined to concentrate the troops north of the Prah within striking distance of Kumassi. With the remainder I intended to clear the Lines of communication and then make a final advance, carrying the sinews of war with me, leaving nothing to chance, but bringing this time the only real help which would enable the garrison to exist, and without which, indeed, in all probability the relieving Force would probably never be able to get there itself. Had not other things occurred to upset all these plans, we might have been in Kumassi long before we actually arrived there.

Orders were sent to Cape Coast to despatch as they landed all carriers with rations and ammunition, and as the telegraph wire was by this time in fair working order, I was generally able to keep in touch with the base. The 9th of June was not a cheerful day for me, for just as I was beginning to think all was going well, I received a despatch from Colonel Carter's Column informing me that he and Wilkinson had advanced to reinforce Hall, but had met with very severe opposition, and after a two and a half hours' fight had been obliged to retire on Kwissa, with a loss of six officers and one British non-commissioned officer wounded, six men killed, and eighty-six wounded. This news entirely took me aback; I could hardly bring myself to believe that four hundred men led by Europeans had not only been stopped,

but forced to retire before the enemy, more especially as they had not been hampered by any quantity of stores or carriers, and were still over thirty-five miles from the enemy's main position at Kumassi. The number of wounded too was out of all proportion, being a fourth of the entire Column.

The scene of Carter's fight was near a village called Dompoassi, three miles north of Kwissa on the main road. Like most of our other earlier actions, it was fought in thick bush country; but unlike many later ones, close formations along the road were employed. Carter bought his experience dearly, and those who followed him reaped the benefits. It is easy to be wise after the event, and it is only fair to him to say that he was adopting the methods then believed to be the best in the country.

It was the 6th of June, a clammy, wet day, like all others in that country at this time of year. The object in view was sufficient to stimulate all ranks; the leader was an officer of long and varied experience in African warfare, most of his men were known to him, and there seemed no reason to doubt that success would crown the day. Yet the name of Dompoassi was soon to become one of gloom, for it was at this very spot that a few days before, and again only a few days later, we suffered severely at the hands of the enemy; on the second occasion losing one of our best officers killed.

Employing the formations then generally in use against the natives of Nigeria, Carter set out from Kwissa for Bekwai and Esumeja. First in order of march is the "point," or head of the leading unit, and with this Captain Roupell. Following at varying distances, but always comparatively close up, comes the remainder of the Column, with the 7-pounder gun and Maxims distributed as ordered along the route. The carriers are well guarded, and the rear-guard brings up the tail. Quietly, but at a fair average pace, they move through the giant forest; there is not yet that look of nervous anxiety that marked all these marches at a later period, when our men had learnt from experience how stealthy was their foe. So far they had advanced without being checked, although they had been roughly handled only a

few days previously, and lost four killed and several wounded; but the enemy had on that occasion retired and left them unmolested. Ahead is the village of Dompoassi; they will soon be there, and then only a few miles before they join hands with Captain Hall. A short halt to allow all ranks to close up, and the Column is steadily moving northwards again. Signs of an enemy are not entirely wanting, as many footprints and tracks show he has lately been there, but nothing has yet occurred to give any special warning. Hark! a single boom not fifty yards on the right flank, and in an instant a thousand Dane and other guns are raining lead into the advanced guard and main body. Hardly is there time to realise what is happening, barely a chance of getting the 7-pounder and Maxims into action, when Roupell and a score of others are weltering in blood, or staggering to their feet to restore order or confidence.

Meantime from the forbidding thick jungle comes the hail of lead; from mounds and tree tops the enemy sends showers of missiles into the staggered Column; the men take all the shelter available as they lie down in the half-filled trenches by the side of the road, or behind rice bags and provision boxes hurriedly formed into defences. The officers are running from section to section, directing the fire and taking charge of the ammunition. Lieutenant (now Major) Edwards, R.A., is severely wounded in two places, his entire gun detachment is *hors de combat;* but Edwards is a British gunner officer, and his regiment now knows how he continued almost alone to work the gun to the last. Lieutenant O'Malley, of the Middlesex Regiment, in charge of a Maxim, keeps up the music to some purpose; his men, however, are also practically all out of action, and he himself is severely wounded, but tenaciously holds on till the Maxim jacket is pierced by a shot and rendered useless. Roupell had meantime been again hit in several places; Edwards was once more shot, this time in the face; Colonel Carter, who was coolly directing the fighting, received a severe wound above the eye, which unfortunately incapacitated him from further command, and this devolved on Colonel Wilkinson;

but he in turn was wounded, though only slightly, whilst Surgeon-Captain Fletcher and Colour-Sergeant Mackenzie, Seaforth Higlanders, were both hit. Lieutenant Shortland, of the 3rd Battalion Royal Irish Regiment, behaved with great gallantry throughout all this trying time.

Seven Europeans out of eleven bore marks of the enemy, and of the rank and file over ninety could tell the same tale. The ammunition is getting low, the young African soldier has not yet learnt what it means to husband that; he believes the white man can produce as much as ever he wants and whenever it is required. It is no time to encourage him in this belief, indeed it is quite time rudely to undeceive him of it. The volumes of smoke from the enemy's black powder fill the rank air, the war drums every now and then beat out their horrid din, but there are no signs of any retirement on their part. Maxim and 7-pounder seem powerless, Lee-Metford and cordite appear for once unable to still the hostile fire. Is it possible the Ashanti can stand against such a hurricane of lead any longer? The heavy fire has by this time cut away a great part of the thick bush and revealed the fact that the enemy are strongly entrenched behind timber stockades, flanked and reflanked by numerous smaller works. Wilkinson casts his eyes over the scene, and has to make a resolve, bitterly unpalatable to him, but, as he believes, necessary; he must withdraw his men and get them into some kind of order.

It is an operation as difficult as distasteful, and needs to be carried out with coolness and courage if it is not to end in panic. Both these qualities Wilkinson possessed in a marked degree, but while he is still considering how best to do it, there comes to his aid Colour-Sergeant John Mackenzie, of the Seaforth Highlanders, in temporary command of a company of the West African Frontier Force. He wears on his jacket the medal ribbon for distinguished conduct in the Field, bravely earned on the Niger a year previously, and he has with him his trusted Yorubas, whom he has himself drilled and trained from the day they took the Queen's shilling. Whether on Highland moor or in African forest,

men of his stamp are ever full of resource, and Mackenzie in his simple way asked to be allowed to charge the enemy with the bayonet. Wilkinson at once seized the opportunity, and Mackenzie, doubling to the rear, hastily collected his men, and no sooner were they up than, leading them himself, with a shout he dashed into the scrub. The word had meantime gone round; the unwounded officers and men in the vicinity were equally prepared, and the whole, rising with one accord, appealed to the bayonet to decide the day.

It was not long before cold steel once again proved its superiority under certain conditions to any other form of attack. The enemy had for hours defied us behind their well-built stockades, but the charge of a few score exasperated men behind those gleaming points of steel was beyond their powers of endurance. The rush of thousands of feet, the hissing of the downtrodden grass, and a few volleys complete the scene; the action of Dompoassi is over. Tired, bleeding, and shaken, the Column retraced its steps towards Kwissa, thankful it was enabled to retire unmolested. Colour-Sergeant Mackenzie for his conspicuous bravery received the Victoria Cross and a commission in the Black Watch. Faithful to his black soldiers, he still serves with the West African Frontier Force on the Niger.

The next day I cabled to the Secretary of State, giving him a *résumé* of affairs, and asked for further reinforcements of eight hundred men and four guns, besides several thousand carriers and thirty Special Service officers. Extra supplies of all kinds were also demanded. The answer to this was received a few days later, and I was informed that my requirements would be met in full.

How to help Carter now became the immediate object, and I ordered Major Melliss, with one hundred and fifty men, and all the available rations and ammunition, to proceed at once from Fumsu to Kwissa. This left me with a little over one hundred men at Prahsu, and nothing whatever in the shape of extra food supplies; and to crown everything a terrific gale swept over the country south of the River Prah, and the telegraph wire was so damaged as to remain

unworkable for several days. However, it was sometimes really almost amusing, for do what one would, invariably something occurred to upset all plans. I found one day a few pages of an old magazine lying in the telegraph office, and on one of the first pages was the quotation from Henry V.—

> "The fewer men the greater share of honour,
> God's will; I pray thee wish not one man more."

It seemed to be a good omen, and I pasted it into my diary. As soon as I had sent Melliss his orders, I lay down on my bed, as my old and only West African complaint, tin poisoning, had got severe hold of me; and at this time, although I dare not let it be known, I was really quite broken in health, and could with great difficulty sit up in the office chair, where perforce for some little time longer I had to pass most of my days. Immediately I woke I went out and gave orders for the remaining one hundred men at Prahsu to start for Fumsu as a reinforcement. This detachment started, but returned after going some miles with a report that the enemy were in strength on the road. I knew very little of the man I had sent out to guide them; he was a civil colonial official, and had started this scare, which turned out to be quite untrue. Next day they again advanced under Major Beddoes, Dublin Fusiliers, the only available officer, and he had to leave his bed with very high fever on him to carry out the duty. After his departure, besides my Staff officers I had but forty men, including sick, in Prahsu, as representing the reserve of the Field Force.

Whilst events were thus shaping themselves north of the Prah, the most annoying delays to the south were preventing the arrival of reinforcements and carriers. First they could not be landed owing to heavy surf at Cape Coast, and then the rising of the rivers kept them halted four days on the journey up to Prahsu; eventually the first batch arrived on the 16th June, and was followed by others every second or third day. Small-pox followed in their train, and a great number were attacked; in addition to the small-pox hospital

at Prahsu, it very soon became necessary to have one at every Post, and at one time there were over five hundred cases. It was a gruesome idea, but I fear many a man with the disease on him more than once was employed to carry loads, although the medical officers took every possible precaution, and inspections were incessant.

Melliss pushed on to Kwissa, which was reached on the 13th June. He had a smart brush with the Adansis *en route;* his British non-commissioned officer was wounded and his bugler killed, whilst there were seven other casualties. I had sent orders by him to Colonel Carter, directing him to remain at Kwissa, and had also sent a special messenger, *viâ* the Obuassi Gold Mines, to Captain Hall at Bekwai, ordering him to send as strong a detachment as he could spare to proceed south *viâ* Essian Kwanta, and assist Carter's Column, which was moving north. Carter, as I have already described, was repulsed at Dompoassi and obliged to retire on Kwissa; nevertheless, the situation was not as bad as it might have been, for I knew (or believed) that Hall's Column would be moving south, and would therefore reinforce Carter. But in a country like Ashanti, where communications were nil, once an order had been issued, there were no means of altering it if necessary, and things had to take their course. All that could be done was to leave matters in the hands of the Commanders on the spot.

After Melliss's arrival at Kwissa, Colonel Carter held a conference and decided to withdraw all the troops from that place to Fumsu, thus abandoning our only Post between Bekwai and the River Fum. His reasons for this I will state later on. The decision was carried into effect, and the first I learnt of it was a report that the Column was on its way back to Fumsu. I can ill describe my chagrin on receiving this news. The retirement in itself was contrary to my wishes, but what the result of it might turn out to be was a serious consideration. It was impossible to countermand Hall's orders, though I did send urgent messages which arrived too late, and I felt something serious would follow. I had not long to wait for my fears to be

realised. On the 16th June, in accordance with my instructions to Hall, the Nupé Company of the 1st Northern Nigeria Battalion left Bekwai and marched in the direction of Kwissa to reinforce Carter wherever he might be found. Captain Wilson, Royal Irish Fusiliers, was in command, and he had with him one hundred and twelve men and two British non-commissioned officers. Marching rapidly, they met no opposition until they approached Dompoassi of evil fame, where they had to pass the numerous stockades, hidden in the dense bush close by the main road. It was once more a case of almost hand-to-hand fighting, only this time the enemy was emboldened by the knowledge that a few days previously a Column trebly large, coming from the opposite direction, had been repulsed at the same spot. Now was their opportunity. Volleys suddenly poured in from every side on the unsuspecting company. The young soldiers, although entirely surprised, did not behave badly, and continued their march, firing rather wildly, but confident in Wilson. He, however, was too conspicuous a mark to escape the enemy long, and fell mortally wounded. Staff-Sergeant Payne, R.A.M.C., was also wounded, whilst six soldiers were killed, and twenty-five others with sixteen carriers received injuries more or less severe. The enemy closed in on every side, advancing to very short range with the object of gaining possession of the dying officer. But the Nupés had no intention of surrendering their charge. Encouraged by Staff-Sergeant Payne and Colour-Sergeant Humphries, Royal Welch Fusiliers, they moved fairly steadily, leaving their own dead, and, alas! several of their wounded, but holding bravely by the hammock in which was their officer. Wilson died shortly afterwards. His only exhortation, when he knew he was dying, was to leave him alone, but not to abandon the helpless, injured men.

Faithful to their duty, the black Nupés guarded the body until they reached Kwissa, there only to find their last hope gone, for that post had already been abandoned. Setting their faces southwards, and now under the command of Colour-Sergeant Humphries, they moved on till Fumsu was

reached, a total distance of thirty-three miles, a great part of which had been covered under the enemy's fire. Poor Wilson was buried there, and a solid cross was placed over his grave after I reached Kumassi. His end was sad, for he had been on the point of starting for South Africa from Jebba, just before we had been ordered to send troops to Ashanti; but as soon as he learnt this he asked to be allowed to remain in West Africa and lead his own men to Kumassi. He had his wish, and died doing his duty. He was an officer of very fine character, and his death was keenly felt by all who knew him.

Colonel Carter had his own reasons for abandoning Kwissa, and did not understand from my orders that he was under all circumstances to hold on to the Post. He had seen a letter, addressed to the Officer Commanding relieving Column, from Governor Sir Frederic Hodgson in Kumassi; this letter asked for urgent help, and described the sufferings of the garrison. I did not myself see this document till 12th June, so of course at the time had no knowledge of it. Carter, therefore, believing it was impossible for him to get to Kumassi *viâ* Dompoassi, came to the conclusion that it was his duty to return to Fumsu, and thence attempt an advance to Kumassi by the flank road through the Obuassi Gold Mines. Under the circumstances he was justified in considering the changed conditions. He made his decision and acted on it; that the result was unfortunate is one of the chances of war.

On the 12th June the letter from Sir Frederic Hodgson, referred to above, reached me. He stated therein that the garrison could hold out on reduced rations till the 11th June. Alas, that date was already passed, but in the hope that he might have under-estimated the actual date I sent urgent orders to Wilkinson, who had succeeded Carter (invalided home owing to his wound) in command at Fumsu, to advance at once to Bekwai, *viâ* Obuassi Gold Mines, with three hundred men and every round of reserve ammunition, and hold out a helping hand to the Governor, should he attempt to leave Kumassi. These were positively the last troops then avail-

able to assist the garrison in the Fort, and I could only trust they might arrive in time to be of use.

For some weeks past I had been in correspondence with various Civil officials regarding the raising of local Levies to be employed against the Ashantis. The object was twofold: first and foremost to prove to them that some of their own neighbours were ready to help the British Government; and secondly, knowing the ancient hatred borne by many of the tribes towards their conquerors, I felt these Levies could be most usefully employed in following our Columns and destroying villages, crops, and plantations. In a campaign of this nature it is folly to allow sentiment to play any part in the operations; there was only one way of ending it, and that was to make the punishment as severe and sharp as possible, and in this the Levies materially assisted. As fighting men or scouts they would have been a source of positive danger, and were never employed except to eat up and destroy whatever the troops left behind them. These Levies were nothing more than the armed retainers of local Chiefs; they had practically no discipline, and were in consequence placed under British officers, who kept them in order. I provided each Levy with a certain number of Dane guns and a proportion of powder and lead, and also made presents to the Captains of companies. Amongst the Chiefs who eventually furnished Levies before the close of operations were the King of Denkera, who brought three thousand men, the Chiefs of Swedru, Dengiasi, Mampon, Juabin, and N'Koranza. The Bekwai King placed his Levies at our disposal throughout the operations. The provisions needed to feed these thousands of men were all taken from farms in Ashanti, Kokofu, Adansi, and other rebel districts when they had once been traversed by our Columns.

At the end of May the whole of the troops in the Gold Coast Colony, as well as those in the Northern Territories, had been placed under my command, and I thus had a free hand to issue such orders as might be necessary. The Secretary of State approved of two of the Nursing Sisters from Nigeria being sent to the Base hospital at Cape Coast,

and these, supplemented later by others, did most valuable work.

During such times as we were then passing through, if there was one thing I certainly did expect, it was that all and any Europeans in the hinterlands would stand by and see the troubles out. Imagine my disgust when I received a letter from a Gold Coast police officer stationed at Obuassi, the headquarters of the Ashanti Gold Fields Corporation, informing me that about twenty of the European miners in the Company's employ intended leaving their posts and making for the coast. This officer himself wrote in a most alarmist tone, and had evidently caught the same fever. I have seldom known a case of more senseless panic, and I will not dwell on it, except to say that I regret the fugitives gave our military Posts a wide berth, as I had issued orders that if any of them passed through these they were to be arrested. I consider I was fully justified in giving this order, considering the critical state of affairs north of the River Prah. In striking contrast to their behaviour was that of Mr. Webster, the manager, and the members of his staff and some others. I was soon after able to send them ample assistance in the shape of men with a British officer in command and reserve ammunition. Two of these gentlemen of the Ashanti goldfields performed an act well worthy of record. Messrs. James and Carey left Obuassi, twenty-one miles distant from Fumsu, the nearest military Post, and unaccompanied and practically unarmed, travelled to Fumsu, then commanded by Beddoes, of the Dublin Fusiliers. The track runs through dense forests; there are several rivers to be crossed, which were then in flood; the Moinsi hills offer a very severe obstacle, and the whole route runs through the southern portion of the rebellious country. It was a most risky undertaking, to put it mildly, and, in truth, I never understood how they got through alive. Having gained the information required, and received a promise that some troops would soon be sent, they started on their return journey and reached the mines safely. Of Obuassi and its prospects I shall have occasion to write more, for I was

able to pay the place a visit on my return journey to the coast.

At Prahsu I received the gratifying news that a battalion of the Central African Regiment (now King's African Rifles[1]) and a detachment of seventy Sikhs had been ordered to join the force in Ashanti from British Central Africa. This would not only prove a welcome reinforcement on arrival, but showed that we were not forgotten, and that the Colonial Office thoroughly realised the difficulties of the campaign. Personally, I was pleased beyond words, for I knew those splendid Indian soldiers the Sikhs, and foresaw what a tower of strength even so small a detachment would be. They had many opportunities, and were most instrumental on 30th September, our last and closing fight in Ashanti, in deciding the issue of what for a short while appeared a somewhat doubtful day.

It was, indeed, at this time necessary that some gleams of joy should be intermingled with the gloom of our surroundings, for, truth to tell, I never again wish to see similar days. It is difficult to describe the why and the wherefore of it; to grasp it one must have been there to see. There was a great fear over most that, do what we might, the chances of failure must be looked in the face. The forces of nature were all against us: the incessant rain, the endless tornadoes, the dripping, dark forests damped one's ardour. Sickness in every form was ever in our midst, and all round us the fever-stricken white man and the half-fed and ill-clothed black man seemed to have fallen on evil days together. The work was very heavy; the comforts of life were absolutely nil. The long and weary marches through swamp and bog were fatiguing to the last degree, and at times there were many who felt we had been set an impossible task. It all came right in the end, but the process of arriving at this happy consummation was a wearisome one.

Travelling in West Africa has been described over and over again, but I imagine very few have had the experience we had in Ashanti, of thoroughly grasping what incessant

[1] They are now serving in Somaliland.

marching in fighting formation, hampered by enormous trains of followers, during the height of the rainy season, really means. One day was very like another, and month followed month in monotonous sameness, save when to our other pleasures was added an ambuscade by the enemy, or a real stand-up fight. This latter we all appreciated; the former had too many drawbacks to be in any way agreeable. I shall endeavour to describe shortly my first day's march across the Prah, which proved to be a very fair sample of most that followed. The Column consisted of two hundred fighting men, a Maxim gun, and eight hundred Transport carriers laden with ammunition and provisions for Kumassi; it was, comparatively speaking, a small Column, for frequently afterwards as many as from three to four thousand men moved together, but it answers the purpose of description. At the very start we had to cross the River Prah, then in high flood. Seven hours were spent in this operation, as twenty or thirty at a time the boats deposited their loads on the slippery, greasy north bank; for three hours of this time it rained incessantly, wetting one to the skin through waterproofs and everything else. At last we are on the move again, over a boggy stretch of half a mile; here the leading section sends back word to say that there is a creek some fifty yards wide with five feet of water in it, and only one dug-out canoe. No help for it; everyone must wade, and the canoe must be used for transporting the ammunition. Officers suffering from fever, and others requiring more care than their fellows must also be got across dry if possible.

Everyone worked cheerfully enough, and matters were progressing favourably. At this moment I arrived on the scene just in time to witness a catastrophe which was enough to dishearten anybody. The office records, books, and such maps as we could muster had been carefully sorted during our halt at Prahsu, and everything had been put into working order for our advance. A Yost typewriter which I had brought from Nigeria formed part of the equipment, and had been of the greatest use to us. For safety's sake the whole were placed in the canoe, but as if luck was determined to

test our already bad tempers to the utmost, the wretched boat upset and everything went to the bottom. With much difficulty the cases were again got up, and the weeks of trouble the Staff had to once more sort the half-ruined documents and renovate that typewriter may easily be understood. I must say for "Yost" that the machine suffered but little from its soaking, and saw out the campaign.

At last we are across this second obstacle and a mile from our original starting-point; it is already late in the afternoon, and the march must be completed if possible before night sets in. The Column is formed up and moves forward, but we have not gone half a mile before another halt takes place. This time it is a huge tree which has fallen across the track, and a path must be made to get round it; quickly the scouts move out, and, breaking through the jungle, take up a covering position until relieved by others from the main body, who in turn move on as the rear-guard approaches. Half a mile of fair going now intervenes, which enables all to get together and push on. Then we come to a hillock, which can be seen some two hundred yards ahead, but it will be a good half-hour before we are on the other side, for between us and it is a fetid swamp, knee deep, full of holes, and strewn with logs lying anyhow in confusion. Doubtless it was here that the wily Adansis had prepared an ambuscade for some former Column. Tumbling about, picking a passage, holding on to tufts of grass, we eventually emerge from this slough of despond and begin the short ascent on the north; only some hundred yards to go, but how horribly slippery it is. One, two, twenty men fall, only to rise again and move on; ammunition boxes and cases of bouilli beef all have a share in the rough-and-tumble, and finally we stand on the topmost summit, thankful it is no worse.

On the particular day I am describing no shot was fired at us, but on other occasions it was near such places as this that a shower of lead was generally poured into the advanced guard, and in the confusion that followed the foe made himself scarce, or held on until a turning movement placed his

flank in danger. For two or three hours the same style of thing goes on, the endless bogs and obstructions occur with annoying regularity, until darkness sets in; the rain, just as if to bid farewell to the dying day, descends in a parting drenching shower, and the blackness of night is added to by the giant silent trees overhead, hanging like a thundercloud above us. "Get on!" "Get on!" can now be heard from the white men; they do get on somehow, and no one thinks it is anything out of the common, for such things are our daily life in this weird land. The village or bivouac is reached hours later than had been intended; from Commander to carrier, all lie down where best they can find shelter, and if shelter is not to be had, then in the open under any sort of improvised covering. Sentries are posted, picquets and patrols detailed, and weary men are glad of such rest as may be possible. Another day's march in the Ashanti Campaign of 1900 is over.

It has apparently been one of the peculiarities of our military system that officers in command of Forces in the Field should be expected to find their way in all kinds of strange lands, either unprovided with maps, or at best with maps frequently so inaccurate as to be dangerous if followed. In Ashanti the only maps I could find were printed on very thick paper, which cracked if folded, and soon turned to pulp if inadvertently opened away from the shelter of a roof. This, however, was a trifle; what was far worse was their inaccuracy. The main road from the sea to Kumassi was fairly accurately delineated, but beyond that everything was more or less guesswork. For instance, the very important town of Kokofu was shown to be seven miles to the east of Esumeja, whereas the correct distance is about two and a half miles; and when Captain Hall advanced to attack it he very nearly came to grief, for the enemy's war camps were actually only a mile and a half distant, and Kokofu lay behind them. When it is remembered that the expedition of 1895–6 passed and halted in the vicinity of Esumeja, it is extraordinary that such a mistake could have been allowed to continue. In addition there were missionaries, such as

Mr. Ramseyer and others, who knew every yard of the country; but apparently it was not thought necessary on the Gold Coast to obtain information so trivial in itself. Again, the important centre of Obuassi, the headquarters of a large gold-mining centre, where there resided over forty Europeans, probably the largest number anywhere in the hinterlands of West Africa, was not shown at all on any available maps. Nevertheless, it was by way of Obuassi that I had to send my flanking Columns to Kumassi, and so we were obliged to trust to doubtful native guides for all our information. Rivers were apparently counted of no note, for such important ones as the Fum, the Adra, and the Offin were only shown by imaginary dotted lines. Our final move from Bekwai for the relief of Kumassi was made by a road known to a European miner, who volunteered to accompany the Column, and by this turning movement we avoided much fighting and saved many lives, but no signs of it were to be found on any map. I could multiply instances indefinitely, but suffice it to say the map was practically of no use to us away from the main road during the entire operations.

On the 22nd June Lieutenant-Colonel Burroughs, with four hundred men of the West African Regiment (a War Office corps), arrived at Prahsu from Sierra Leone, and advanced up the main road towards Bekwai. This detachment met with opposition, but by scouting very carefully carried the newly erected Adansi stockades on the steep side of the Moinsi hills with a bayonet charge. One man was killed and three wounded. Burroughs halted at Kwissa, and on the 30th June arrived before the well-known village of Dompoassi. Darkness was setting in, but this appeared an opportunity for surprising the enemy and this was done. The village was rushed by Captains Stallard and Tighe, of the West African Regiment, with the advance-guard, and the enemy fled in wild confusion, leaving thirty dead and quantities of guns, powder, and food. This sudden attack had an excellent effect on the Adansis, and was, in fact, the first real success we had had. Next day all the numerous

stockades, which had cost us so many lives and casualties, were destroyed, and Burroughs was able to push on to Bekwai, where he joined hands with Colonel Wilkinson, who had meantime marched round from Fumsu by the flank road through Obuassi. The combined Columns made a very respectable show, and finally convinced the Bekwai King and his wavering Chiefs that the hour of reckoning with his Ashanti neighbours was fast approaching.

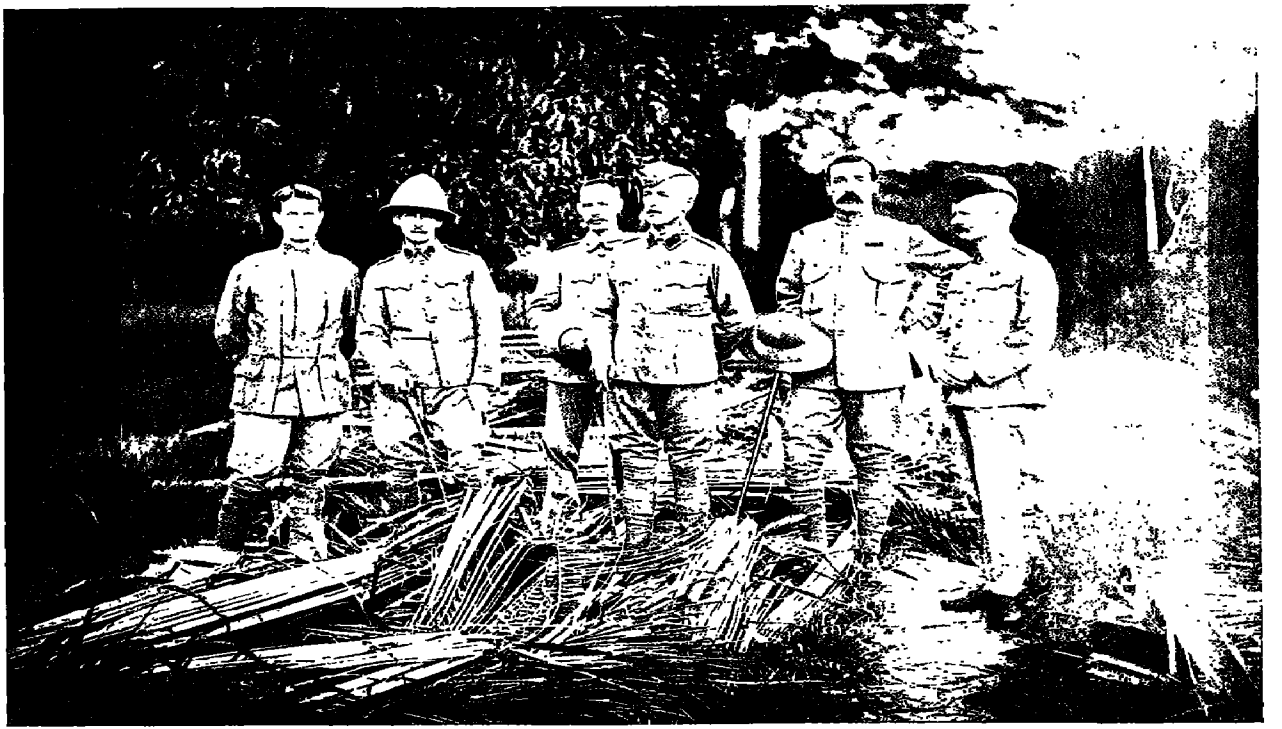
Whilst the events just recorded were taking place to the north, I had at last managed, by working the carriers through from Cape Coast in several journeys, to collect a sufficient reserve of European rations, ammunition, and rice to make a forward move possible by the end of June. Dr. McDowell, our principal medical officer, who had arrived from Northern Nigeria, had also been very busy getting his hospital arrangements into order, and could now muster sufficient medicines and hammocks with carriers to ensure proper treatment of the wounded. McDowell proved himself throughout the expedition to be one of the best organisers it was our fortune to have with the force. His forethought was remarkable, his energy was unceasing, and his nature was such as to gain immediately the confidence of all with whom he ever came in contact. I was fortunate also in obtaining the services of Captain Holford, 7th Hussars, who came out from England and joined me at Prahsu as A.D.C.; but I very soon found his abilities and energy were better adapted for a more useful sphere, and he was appointed Deputy-Assistant Adjutant-General, a billet he filled with conspicuous success to the end of the campaign.

Amongst those who joined the Force before I moved from the Prah was Colonel Man Stuart, of the Gordon Highlanders; he was appointed Base Commandant at Cape Coast, and his experience, gained partly under the great General Gordon and in various lands from China to Egypt, proved of incalculable benefit to the whole Force. Nothing ever went wrong at the Base, where, combined with plenty of hard work, much tact was essential in dealing with soldiers and Colonial officials. Mr. Haddon Smith, Assistant Colonial

Secretary of the Gold Coast, had also volunteered and joined me as Chief Political Officer with the Force; he was of very great assistance, and, although a civilian, was at heart a thorough soldier. He was present with me in two actions, and on both occasions discarded temporarily his civilian rôle and joined heart and soul in the fighting.

On the 26th June I once more received news from Kumassi, dated 17th June. It was a short letter from Sir Frederic Hodgson, saying he could now hold out to the 20th June (already past). This letter was received by Hall at Esumeja on the evening of the 21st, and at once sent on by him to Wilkinson at Bekwai. The latter received it at midnight, and in drenching rain started with every man he could spare for Esumeja, in order to assist the garrison of Kumassi, which he believed would break out by the main Cape Coast road. Hall had, a short time previously, heard the distant firing of big guns in the direction of Kumassi, which he felt sure were those of the escaping Column; but, of course, this was only conjecture on his part. Wilkinson remained the night at Esumeja, and as nothing further took place, he returned to Bekwai next day.

The month of June had seen the scattered detachments of the Force for the relief of Kumassi gradually collected, and, after many vicissitudes, distributed along the Line of communications. Fresh troops had landed, stores, guns, and ammunition been received from England and some of the West African colonies, a hurriedly selected Staff improvised, and matters generally placed on a fairly satisfactory footing. In addition, troops from British Central Africa and Somaliland were under orders for Ashanti, a detachment of Indian Sikh soldiers was on its way to help in the final operations, and the Colonial Office was prepared to furnish a battalion of the West India Regiment and volunteers from the West Indies, as well as another half-battalion of the West African Regiment. All this was highly satisfactory, but the immediate relief of Kumassi was the one pressing matter, and for this operation none of these large reinforcements could of course be available.



HEADQUARTERS STAFF AT PRAHSU

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However, there was no question as to our carrying out the relief; that must be done at once, if it was to be done at all, and with whatever troops there were at hand. With this object I made up my mind to leave Prahsu and move direct on Kumassi, as I felt sure that, come what might, a garrison would certainly be left to hold the Fort. My intention was to abandon temporarily some of the Posts on the Line of communications, and leaving a sufficient Force at Bekwai and Esumeja to guard the hospitals and assure the loyalty of the Bekwais, to march with the remainder by an unknown route, and turn the enemy's main stockades on the Cape Coast road. In the country, under my command, from Bekwai to the sea base inclusive, at this time I had a total of one thousand five hundred Infantry, three 12½-pounder Vickers-Maxim guns, five 7-pounder guns, and eight ·303 Maxims.

For the actual relief of Kumassi it was necessary to have about seven hundred and fifty fighting men, with a proportion of Field-guns and Maxims, as I knew we could not transport, with less than seven hundred carriers, sufficient food and ammunition for the starving garrison, and also, for the troops I intended to leave in the Fort, with provisions for six weeks. Then there had to be calculated the carriers for the relieving Column itself, to convey their own supplies for, say, four days, then for the carriage of Field-guns and Maxims, hospitals and stretchers, service ammunition, and fifty other absolutely necessary purposes. When made up on the lightest possible scale, the total non-combatants numbered one thousand seven hundred and fifty, and these must needs be adequately guarded. Sir Frederic Hodgson had in a very generous spirit, which was most valuable to me in arranging my movements, informed me in his message of 17th June of the difficulties I might expect to meet. He had plainly stated that it was imperative I should bring up as many supplies as possible, and warned me of the opposition I should certainly meet; and I felt with his warning before me that it was pure folly to repeat former tactics, and merely relieve the Fort with men, but without food. Moreover, the enemy by this time had ample time to make every preparation,

and knew to an hour where we should be and from which direction we were coming.

The constant repulses which our Columns had experienced were beginning to shake the confidence of the men, and it was becoming a matter for consideration whether, in case of any further checks, they would be found sufficiently steady to stand the strain of a big fight before Kumassi, should such take place. I therefore determined to see for myself the causes which led to such frequent want of success, and so leaving the telegraph behind me and temporarily severing my communications, I started for Bekwai on the 1st July.

CHAPTER XVIII

1900

ADVANCE TO TOBIASSI—AND FUMSU—KWISSA—REPULSE OF COLONEL BURROUGHS AT KOKOFU—WE REACH DOMPOASSI—BEKWAI—THE KING OF BEKWAI—TEREBOAM—N'KWANTA—ESUMEJA

ON the 1st July, with the Headquarter Staff, I arrived at the small village of Tobiassi, and next day reached Fumsu, on the River Fum, ordinarily a very small stream, but now a regular torrent. Our usual rate of marching entirely depended on the ability of the carriers and gun bearers to get through the swamps, which were dignified by the name of road, hence only a few miles could be covered daily. Here I received a letter from Wilkinson at Bekwai, telling me that the Chief of Pekki (which is the most northerly village in Bekwai territory and on the Kumassi border) had sent him a messenger with the news that the Governor had broken out of Kumassi, and was at N'Kwanta with the chief of that town. He added that there were with the Governor, Lady Hodgson and ten other Europeans, and about six hundred soldiers; that they had suffered severe losses in coming out, and he believed they were making for the coast.

That the Governor should have decided to quit Kumassi under the circumstances he was situated in was not at all surprising; on the contrary, he could do nothing else; but that he intended making direct for the sea was unpleasant news, as the mere presence of a few hundred of his soldiers at Bekwai would have allowed of my taking on all my own men to force our way into the Fort, and the others could have remained in garrison till our return from Kumassi.

To summarise the affair, the escaped garrison, after halting

three days at N'Kwanta, marched direct for the coast through Dengiassi and Denkera country, and arrived at Cape Coast on the 10th July.

And now that the truth was out there remained nothing to do but hasten on our advance northwards. I wired to the Secretary of State all I knew of the movements of the Governor and the retiring Column, and assured him that Kumassi would be relieved by the 15th July, the last day for which there were rations in the Fort. With the help of the newly raised company of local "Pioneers," ably commanded by Captain Neal, of the 3rd Battalion Scottish Rifles, the worst parts of many swamps had been improved, and some impassable portions corduroyed with logs and timbers. This officer was one of the most useful in the Force, ever ready to set his hand to anything, and was very much liked by his black men. Headquarters reached Brafu Edru, near the foot of the Moinsi hills, on the 6th July, and Kwissa the following day. These hills here run east and west, and rise very suddenly from the low-lying plains. The ascent is by a very steep zigzag path some two miles in length, and as slippery as glass, after rain. The surrounding scenery is magnificently wild, and, even tired and weary as most of us were, there was not an officer but felt lost in admiration of the fine view. From the summit you look away south over the boundless dark forests of Adansi; the Prah, the Fum, and other streams appear like silver threads set in an emerald sea; monster trees grow right up to the summits of the hills, mammoth creepers and vines innumerable form a sort of canopy everywhere, whilst the huge raindrops fall ceaselessly like pearls on a carpet of wildest luxuriance. All is beautiful, but it is the beauty of death; for nature is to-day still, and instinctively one ponders whether we shall again look on the same scene. Those who do so will have their faces homeward turned, when their work is done, and their labours are completed. Buried beneath the thickest foliage, and almost entirely concealed from view, near the steepest part of the road, we passed and examined the small stockade erected by the



WHERE WE CROSSED THE RIVER PRAH

DRAWING BY LADY HELEN GRAHAM

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enemy to oppose Burroughs's advance, and which the West African Regiment had carried with a charge. It is significant of this small affair that piles of ·303 ammunition were found by our men in the enemy's trenches.

I entered the small stockaded enclosure at Kwissa with a light heart, for now we were over those forbidding hills and on the Kumassi plateau, and next day I should meet Colonel Burroughs with his Column coming down from Bekwai as previously arranged. I had sent him orders to effect this junction in the vicinity of Dompoassi, so that in case our wily foe again made up his mind to try conclusions at his chosen spot, he would receive a very warm welcome indeed. Presently I received a letter from Burroughs informing me that he had attacked Kokofu on the 3rd July with a large Column from Bekwai, but had been repulsed with heavy casualties; the original despatches had been lost, and the messenger probably killed. This was a severe blow to me, and I began to feel much like Sisyphus. The Governor's ominous words came back with fearful bitterness, if the Fort is not relieved by the 15th instant at latest it "must surrender," and I had pledged my word home that this would be done "under any circumstances." It was getting a close thing, but it was this more than anything which gave me confidence. When one is really put to it is generally the time when one's best efforts seem to spring to life. There are times when one almost hugs misfortune, for it appears a solace to the feelings. I did not so much mind the facts, but I could see on the faces of officers and men a look of seeming pity for me. Now anything is better than to be the subject of pity, and I had no intention of allowing myself to be made so. I remember well surmising whether the smile I put on gave away my thoughts. Anyhow, it was no time for reflecting on one's own shortcomings, and after sending off several messages I ordered a parade of the garrison. Different races need to be differently treated, there can be no single code for all classes of mankind; what may appear theatrical to one class of soldiers often appeals to another. In this case I thought I knew my men,

and I acted accordingly. The West African soldier dearly loves to hear the bugle and the wild hurrahs of a northern race; his blood is up when he can be made to understand that a combination of these means a headlong rush which nothing can stop. I had long taught the men that this was the final stage of every fight, and that it was only resorted to when their white leaders felt the supreme moment of victory had arrived. The parade was drawn up in hollow square, and I spoke to the men like one would to children; the ranks turned facing inwards, and at a given signal the bugles sounded the charge, the drums crashed out the roll, and every man took up the hurrah! The charge continued sounding for some time, and I could see it was with the greatest difficulty many of the men could restrain themselves from dashing forward. The officers waved their swords, and when it all ceased many of the soldiers were wildly excited. I explained to them once more that before Kumassi that same charge would be sounded, when the fight was practically ours, and nothing could stop them if they would but rush headlong regardless of any Ashanti. I believe they really looked on the parade as a sure forerunner of victory, and they certainly carried out the injunctions to the letter.

The town of Kokofu had long been a thorn in the side of the relieving Force. Situated two and a half miles east of Esumeja, and outside Bekwai territory, it contained a considerable population very hostile to our rule. Half a mile on its western side the enemy had erected strong stockades across the road, thus proving it was the handiwork of Ashantis as opposed to Adansis, for the latter invariably constructed their defences parallel to and never across a road. Captain Hall, as previously related, had attempted the capture of Kokofu in May, but had been forced to retire long before he ever reached the site of the entrenchment. Burroughs, after his success at Dompoassi on 1st July, believed he could take the place, and accordingly sallied out from Bekwai on the 3rd July with a strong column, consisting of one 12½-pounder Vickers-Maxim gun, four ·303 Maxim guns, and five hundred men; in addition, he kept in reserve

one ·303 Maxim and one hundred and fifty men, and was unhampered by carriers or other impedimenta. All went well till he was within hail of the stockades, the positions of which were, of course, unknown to him.

A typical Ashanti fight then commenced; as if with one consent, from every side rose the hideous boom of Dane guns, in this instance largely augmented by Martini-Henrys and Sniders, and every here and there by a Lee-Metford carbine—trophies of fights near Kumassi and from some of our own engagements along the Line of communications. The quick-firing big gun belches out its shrapnel and case into the unseen foe, the chattering Maxims whip the undergrowth out of all recognition, or bark the numerous trees; the enemy makes a dash at one point which appears particularly vulnerable, and I was assured that the answering crash of the Vickers-Maxim literally swept them back into cover. But this dark race is made of good stuff; they do not mean to be denied, and quickly clearing the front of the Maxims, the enemy gradually enveloped the hospital and carriers. The wounded are fast accumulating, and the surgeon's hands are full; the rear-guard is also engaged as the ever-expanding enemy spreads his wings round the devoted Column. Lieutenant Brounlie, of the West India Regiment, lies dead—another gallant life given in the performance of duty. Colonel Burroughs, in command, Captains Stallard, Bedfordshire Regiment, St. Hill, West Riding Regiment, Lieutenants Ellis and Tighe, both of the West India Regiment, Lieutenant Gibson, Dorsetshire Regiment, and Sergeant-Major Bosher, R.A., of the West African Frontier Force, have all been hit more or less severely, whilst five of the rank and file of the West African Regiment and West African Frontier Force have been killed and sixty-two wounded.

The progress being made is nil, and night closes in early in those regions; something must be done. Had a bayonet charge now been ordered, in my opinion it would probably have turned the fortune of the day, for it was the one thing the Ashantis always feared. But the supreme Commander

on the spot can alone decide the course to be adopted. Burroughs decided to retire, and the fiat went forth. Slowly the Column began to retrace its steps towards Esumeja. The enemy had been severely punished, but not enough on this occasion to frighten him thoroughly; the signal for retirement on our part was equally the signal to press home the attack on his. In an instant the firing redoubled, new life was instilled into the hesitating masses, and the long Column was soon defending its flanks and rear, whilst the hospital and its escort made their way as quickly as possible towards Bekwai. Twelve further casualties were added to the list during this retirement, making a total of eighty-six of all ranks for the day.

Coming as it did, just immediately before the final operations for relieving Kumassi, this severe repulse was a most unfortunate affair. The West African Regiment was not a Colonial corps, but was raised by and was under the direct control of the War Office. The officers and men served under different regulations to our own, and the corps had done good work during the Hut Tax Rebellion in Sierra Leone, which was its headquarters. The success which had attended the night surprise of Dompoassi on 1st July had, I think, slightly turned the men's heads; they imagined they could well afford to despise the Ashantis, and had not been discouraged in the foolish belief which had begun to spread in their ranks, that they were superior to other West African troops.

Perhaps it was as well they should learn their lesson early in the operations. As a matter of fact, at this fight before Kokofu a large portion of the Force consisted of men of the West African Frontier Force as well, but the post of honour, as was only natural, was given to the West African Regiment, whose Chief commanded the whole Column. To me such a discomfiture, when I least imagined it possible, came most inopportunely. On the 7th July I received the news, and Kumassi must be relieved by the 15th. There had been up to now at least one lot of soldiers who had not witnessed defeat, and these I thought would be useful men at the

supreme moment; but this dream had now also vanished, and almost every man marching to Kumassi would carry with him the recollection of former reverses.

On the 8th July I left Kwissa. The Post was to be held by one hundred and fifty men and one gun until Kumassi should have been relieved; but as we trudged through the forest and found ourselves nearing Dompoassi without resistance, I made a resolve, which was to call up every spare man from Fumsu to reinforce us at Bekwai. This reinforcement was to march rapidly day and night, taking its chances of being surprised *en route;* at Kwissa it was to pick up the garrison there and abandon the Post, burning any stores or supplies that could not be carried with it, and the combined force was then to advance to Bekwai, joining us the day before we started for Kumassi. This reinforcement would bring the total strength of the relief Column up to one thousand fighting men. Thus once again, and this time by my own orders, the Line of communications was to be severed, a newly erected fort and buildings to be, for a second time, given over to the enemy, and all the work of weeks undone. But it had now become an imperative necessity, for it was plain that if Columns of six hundred men without baggage could be repulsed, it would need every one of only a thousand, to force their way past many stockades and barriers whilst guarding one thousand seven hundred carriers, and withal covering some twenty-seven miles of road before they reached the Fort. It was to make up this total of a thousand men that it became necessary to relinquish for a week our hold on the Lines of communication, as otherwise we could have mustered but seven hundred and fifty fighting men all told. But of one thing I felt certain, and that was that now the enemy saw us making a final move northwards, their ignorance would be our best ally, and that they would temporarily give up attacking our communications and muster in strength before Kumassi to resist our advance. This surmise turned out perfectly correct, and no serious attempt was made for ten days to harass our Posts towards the Prah. One Chief explained to me afterwards that his people

were just at this time so entirely puzzled by our seemingly timid moves backwards and forwards, followed by sudden combinations, that they believed their gods were angry with them, and that the white man's Fetish was in the ascendant again.

As the Column passed the numerous stockades near Dompoassi, it was obvious that many a stiff combat had taken place here. The path had been cleared and the jungle cut down, and in place of stones and twigs the ground was literally paved with empty cartridge cases, ammunition boxes, and other remnants of a fight. The fearful waste of ammunition was writ in large letters before each stockade; here lay a hundred, there a hundred and fifty brass cases, all in a lump, eloquent testimony to the difficulty that the officers must have experienced in controlling young soldiers in their first engagements. We halted and examined with much interest the defences, which stretched on and off for nearly half a mile, mostly on our right flank, of the road. They wore a sorry look now, for spade and pickaxe had been busy destroying them, but they spoke plainly of considerable skill shown in their construction. The best were some four feet in height, and consisted of green trunks, two feet underground and four above; they varied from two to four feet in thickness, the outer timbers being crossed by others on the inside, and the interior filled in with earth and logs, etc. The longest single one, as far as I remember, was about a hundred and twenty yards, and was flanked by others in close proximity. Each stockade in addition was indented and gave plenty of cross fire, and the flanks were cleverly thrown back or forwards, according to requirements. They were not to be compared in strength and finish to the stockades round Kumassi, which some weeks later were attacked and destroyed by Colonel Burroughs's Columns, but were greater in extent. Like all Adansi defences, they were built more or less parallel to the road, and, as was common to all entrenchments in the country, were constructed entirely from the rear, that is, the enemy's side of the works. In their front nothing was ever touched, the jungle and trees

were left exactly as they grew; it was death to anyone who so far forgot himself as to remove anything between us and the actual works, and thus, as it were, give away the position. As an invariable rule, on their own side were numerous paths leading from the forest, and behind a belt of trees or bush, generally of some fifty to a hundred yards in depth, stood the war camps in well-cleared open spaces. These were constructed with a decided eye to comfort, and consisted of huts raised on plinths, drains and water receptacles, pegs driven into trees for hanging accoutrements or haversacks on; and the larger camps near Kumassi were laid out on regular lines, and had small Fetish houses, and even sham gardens with seats and chairs. One thing was never absent from any camp; strewed in every direction could be seen heaps of empty or broken gin bottles, the wherewithal employed to infuse courage into our savage foe; and nothing struck me more throughout the campaign than the fact that everything had been done with such marked deliberation. It was evident, especially round Kumassi itself, that the Ashantis believed their day had come again, and that the white man's end was merely a question of time; otherwise it is difficult to imagine why they took the immense trouble they did to make their stockades of such a permanent nature.

At Dompoassi, in accordance with prearranged plans, we found Colonel Burroughs's battalion waiting our arrival, and heard the story of the repulse before Kokofu. It had been my intention to make a feint on this town, two days before we started from Bekwai for Kumassi, and thus at the last moment draw part of the enemy's Forces away from the vicinity of the Fort for its defence, and I had been particularly desirous this plan should not leak out; however, a Commander must take the bad luck with the good, and when a few days later we actually carried out the original plan, the unsuspecting foe fell partly into the trap.

Messengers with promises of very high reward started for Fumsu and Kwissa, carrying the orders which were to bring up the very last reinforcements; and on the 9th July I

arrived at Bekwai, and was met by the loyal King. Although explained in a previous chapter, it will assist the reader to recapitulate shortly the peculiar position held by Bekwai in these operations. The territory, although small, was situated between the River Prah and Kumassi, and on the left flank of our advance northwards. To its south lay the hostile country of the Adansis, and on its east was the rebel town of Kokofu. But, fortunately for us, a part of the Kumassi-Cape Coast road passed through the eastern portion of Bekwai country, and the post of Esumeja was its furthermost eastern limit; whilst within four miles of Esumeja, on the south-west, stood the chief town Bekwai itself, the residence of the King. Towards Kumassi his country trended north-westwards and ended at the large village of Pekki, which divided Bekwai from the land of the Kumassis proper. When the Ashantis rose in rebellion and shut in the Governor and his small garrison, Yaw Boaki, King of Bekwai, determined to cast in his lot with us. He was wise enough to recognise what the ultimate results could alone be, and when Captain Hall arrived at Esumeja his loyalty was confirmed. He passed through some very doubtful times, and more than once acknowledged afterwards that he had been on the point, not of deserting our cause, but of seeking safety in flight, fearful lest his country might be suddenly swamped by the gathering enemies on every side of him.

When it is remembered that he had been entered in the list of those from whom payment for the war of 1874 had only a few months previously been demanded, it is little short of astonishing how the Chief remained faithful to his word. With every kind of inducement at first held out to him by his neighbours, and the prospects of utter annihilation should he refuse their offers, he never swerved a hair's-breadth from his pledged word; and even when his own people were literally living on roots and jungle produce, and he himself had not provisions sufficient for his household, he sent the few eggs or vegetables he could muster for the use of the sick and wounded in hospital. He had his reward in the end, it is true, but Yaw Boaki, of Bekwai, will always be to

me the emblem of a noble black Chief, who behaved as a gentleman, and deserves the name of King.

I felt proud to grasp him by the hand, as he alighted from his chair of state outside his main gate; and when we were duly seated I congratulated him on his conduct, and assured him that Her Majesty's Government would remember his loyalty. It was very interesting, notwithstanding, to watch the fine old man, now bowed down with anxiety, and to observe his look of relief when I assured him that the soldiers of the Great White Queen could never be beaten by all the Ashantis in the world. His lips quivered and his frame trembled as he asked me to shake his hand in token of my promise to conduct him to Kumassi later on, so that he might see with his own eyes the Union Jack over its walls. Behind him stood Mr. Jones, an African missionary who had long been resident in Bekwai, and who had, without doubt, been his mainstay, and probably the chief cause of his remaining loyal. Turning to him he said, "Bring my Union Jack," and when it was produced he opened it and said pensively, "Yes, I know those colours, they are better than all our Fetish promises." Our first palaver did not last long, and ended with my presenting him with a substantial amount of gold, and the cavalcade moved off amidst shouts and the braying of war horns. I think they really believed the hour of deliverance was at hand. Mr. Jones did excellent service for the Government throughout the campaign, and received a reward. He at present resides in his own village near Cape Coast Castle.

Nothing now remained but to await the arrival of the last reinforcements, expected on the night of the 11th July. Whilst these are making their forced march, I will tell the story of the Column which, under command of Major Morris, had since the 23rd June been moving south towards the sea.

When Sir Frederic Hodgson found it was absolutely impossible to remain any longer in Kumassi, as already related, he entrusted the command of the troops about to undertake the hazardous march to the coast to the senior officer present. To write of this movement as merely a

hazardous one is to describe very faintly what it must have meant to the garrison, and to none others can any description of it convey its terrible reality. Enfeebled by disease and hunger, worn out by repeated and fruitless sorties against a determined enemy, disheartened by the non-arrival of the relief they might with reason have expected earlier, and lastly, but perhaps chiefly, having in their charge ladies whose lives were in their keeping, is it difficult to picture what must have been the feelings of those officers to whom it fell to prove once more what Englishmen can do under every trial? Blank dismay reigned amongst the soldiers, the women and children crowded round those hateful walls; the confidence born of success, so long possessed by them, must by this time have almost entirely vanished. Food there was none, ammunition was limited, hope had well-nigh fled, and as they looked over the dreary waste of vegetation on that eventful 22nd of June, and knew that the next day would finally decide their fate, as they attempted to break through the bloodthirsty throng which encircled them, the chances of seeing another sunset must have appeared small. It is an unpleasant picture to dwell on, and fortunately one that need not often be painted, even in the varied history of our wide empire; for to be defeated or to have to surrender is one thing, but when either means a prolonged and cruel death, accompanied by torture in its most loathsome form, the mind may well shrink in horror from its mere imagination.

And if these were the sensations of those about to make their plunge into the unknown—a plunge which at least, hope told, might land them in safety—what must have been the thoughts of those who were to stay behind and maintain their country's honour within their prison walls? Three white men and a hundred and fifteen black soldiers, with a proportion of starving refugees—men, women, and children —too weak to even attempt to escape. This was to be the last link with empire in this particular portion of the Queen's possessions. Only one hope was theirs, and that was that relief might soon come. Buoyed up by this,

perhaps, their feelings may have been less sad than they otherwise might have been; but taken in any light, and viewed from any point, their fate was in the hands of God alone, for by no efforts of their own, by no sacrifice on their parts, singly or unitedly, could any one of them escape, unless the arrival of a relief Column saved them from their doom.

And now the long-dreaded day has arrived. It is a misty, damp, and clammy morning; comrades must part, some for ever. Gentle ladies and rough soldiers, English gentlemen and savage carriers are on an equality this morning; life is precious to all. It is happily characteristic of our race to help the weak whatever be their creed or colour, and so the strong man buckles on his sword, and his look is a guarantee to the ladies that they will not want in the hour of danger. At last the signal is given, and the Column starts on its race for life. A very few minutes and the advanced guard is in the depth of that awe-inspiring forest, whilst behind trails in serpent fashion the long line of men and carriers, followed by servants, by Chiefs and their retinues, all thankful to have the protection of the rear-guard.

One fact has always puzzled me, and that is, that following behind the rear-guard itself were over one thousand people fleeing from the fate they dreaded. With no military protection, and wasted with starvation, they offered a sure mark for any Ashanti who happened to know they were there, and the headless bodies we found later on along that forest path bore ample testimony to the fact that it was not long before the enemy took in the situation.

Sir Frederic Hodgson aptly describes this when he writes: "It was a gruesome road to pass along in the immediate presence of the enemy." The presence was soon enough felt, and the advance-guard engaged. This time, however, it was neck or nothing; the occasion demanded prompt action, and, as usual, when such is necessary, the British officers were there to do the work. Captain Leggett, of the 5th Worcestershire Regiment, and Captain Armitage, 3rd South Wales Borderers, leading a simultaneous direct and

flank attack, and well followed by the Hausas, who acted with "spirit and gallantry" (despatch), charged and cleared the rebels out of their position. Leggett received a mortal wound, but lived long enough to know that his brave spirit had not been given in vain. On previous equally dangerous occasions he had displayed total disregard of life, and his name lives amongst his comrades, white and black. The enemy had been taken entirely by surprise, and having no idea of the direction to be followed by the Column, were unable to obtain reinforcements. The opportunity was a good one for the advanced guard to redouble their exertions, and they hurried on until they came on another stockade. This too was carried at the expense of another gallant life. Captain Marshall, of the Royal West Kent Regiment, fell mortally wounded. Twice before during the siege had he been wounded, and now he must add yet another to the roll of those who have died for their country in West African hinterlands.

Up to midday the straggling column marched, harassed on every side. From tree and rock, from stream and hillock, ever came a shower of lead, and back in angry whirls went the small hissing bullets from the ·303. It is a doubtful race, for there is yet time for the enemy to muster in overpowering strength and encircle the, comparatively speaking, small fighting band, and the work of destroying the followers in the rear will then be easy enough. But Morris had formed his plans very carefully, and they worked out well. Every attack is repulsed, and mile after mile is traversed fairly rapidly, till the village of Terrabum is reached between five and six p.m., and a halt called.

The scene in that remote village, as Morris describes it, was "almost beyond description"; some three thousand souls being jammed into a space not more than one hundred and twenty yards in circumference. The noise must have been hideous, the confusion appalling, the whole scene probably more like a lunatic asylum than a military camp. It only needed one thing more to complete the pandemonium, and that was not long in coming. With darkness arrived

the rain, and this soon turned into an African tornado. Blinding sheets of water put the seal of death on many already fast-sinking souls, the streets ran deep in mud and dirt, and there were some who would have preferred the certainty of death in Kumassi to such abject misery. Everything possible was done for the sick and the wounded, but at such times all must necessarily take their share of the trials and taste the horrors of uncivilised war. It was an event the Ashanti child of to-day will often talk of in the years to come, for it was a veritable harvest of death in rear of that Column, where many hundreds breathed their last before the sun had set. The official returns furnish the following details amongst officers and soldiers only: forty-one killed and thirty-nine missing, or a total of eighty deaths out of six hundred. This does not reckon the wounded, who numbered thirty-seven, and, of course, does not include casualties amongst either Government carriers or the followers who were attempting to escape.

What must have been the mental and bodily sufferings of that much-tried woman Lady Hodgson during all these trials it is impossible to surmise, but one thing I know, that the black soldiers who later returned to Kumassi and served under my command had nothing but admiration to express for her heroic conduct. It is also very pleasant to record what Major Morris reports (in his official letter to me describing the march) of two ladies of the Basel Mission who accompanied the party. "I wish to place on record the admiration of the whole force for the magnificent way in which two ladies of the Basel Mission behaved. Day after day did these two ladies, without hammocks (the carriers with which they were provided having run away) and without a change of clothing, go through the long, arduous marches, often up to their waists in water, always cheerful, and without a murmur of complaint."

On the 25th June the Column reached the friendly village of N'Kwanta, having been continually harassed *en route*. By this time everything in the way of clothing, bedding, and necessaries had been lost or thrown away, for death had

been at work amongst the carriers, and no one will ever know the mortality. Months afterwards we counted on the N'Kwanta road, within two miles of the Fort, over a hundred dead bodies on the path itself, and who could tell how many hundreds lay in the thick bush all round? It was a perfect charnel-house.

At N'Kwanta the Column halted from the 25th to the 28th June. Had we but known what was known to them, there would have been no necessity for all the privations they had later to endure before reaching the coast. It was, however, not to be, and the march to the sea was continued. I have not gone into details, but it was necessary, in order to follow the sequence of events, to relate what took place whilst we were preparing to make our final move on Kumassi.

On the morning of the 10th July, the day after my arrival at Bekwai, there crawled into Esumeja a half-starved Hausa soldier, covered with sores and dazed with hunger and fatigue. He took out from his loin-cloth a small piece of paper; the contents read as follows:—"From O.C. Kumassi to O.C. Troops Esumeja. His Excellency and main troops left for coast seventeen days ago; relief most urgently wanted here. Remaining small garrison diminishing: disease, etc. Reduced rations for only few days more. F. E. Bishop, Captain G.C.C." He was sent on in a hammock to my camp at Bekwai. It was a sad and a last appeal, but it betrayed no craven alarm. It breathed no word of reproach, it asked no impossible task. It struck home to our hearts, and almost made us tremble to think we might have been too late. What it did do, however, was to assure us that the garrison could still hold out, although "for only a few days more." The bearer was a hero; he had faced death to save his comrades, and he had carried out his task. Alone, and with small hope of success, he had passed through the cordon of the enemy and arrived in our camp. I promoted him to the rank of Sergeant on the spot, and presented him with a sum of money; but I have ever since regretted I did not recommend him for a Victoria Cross, for surely it was well earned. Is it too late now?

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Meantime the runners I had despatched from Dompoassi on the 8th July, with orders for every available man and gun to join me from Fumsu, had reached their destination safely and delivered their message. It was obeyed with great promptitude. Four officers and one British non-commissioned officer, with reinforcements of the West African Frontier Force, had reached Fumsu from the coast after a very trying march at 8.30 p.m. on the 9th July. At dawn next day all their carriers had been sent back to the Prah to bring up supplies; but at 11 a.m. arrived the orders for the troops to join me *viâ* Kwissa, and runners were immediately sent off to recall the above-mentioned carriers, and by 2 p.m. they were once again back in Fumsu. By 5.30 p.m. they were ready to advance, and Captain MacCarthy Morrogh, Lieutenants Phillips and Monck-Mason, Doctors Thompson and Langstaff, and Sergeant Desborough, with Captain Leland, of the Gold Coast Regiment, attached for duty, one company of the West African Frontier Force, and two 12½-pounder Vickers-Maxim millimètre guns, started for Kwissa. Marching in darkness, with the same hateful bogs and swamps to wade, under a drenching rain, the eager officers and faithful Hausas and Yorubas, on this occasion accompanied by their Hausa carriers from the Niger, arrived at the foot of the Moinsi hills an hour after midnight. Every village passed through was found deserted, and the diary, short and sweet, sums up the situation: "Arrived foot of Moinsi hills 1.30 a.m.—all villages burnt—rain in torrents —roads a quagmire."

Daylight next morning found the small, game Column climbing the steep and slippery sides of the Moinsi hills, and at 9 a.m. Kwissa was reached. All surplus stores were destroyed, and by midday on the 11th the combined troops, now numbering some two hundred and fifty men, in addition to some of the West African Regiment, who had been sent down to act as an extra support, left Kwissa for Bekwai, where they arrived at 10 p.m. the same night. It was an exceptionally fine march, carried out under great difficulties, and I often recall the sensation of satisfaction as I

heard well-known voices outside my hut, and felt that so many good officers and men had been added to our relief Column.

During our three days' enforced halt at Bekwai I had several interviews with the King. His one great object was to discover my immediate intentions, and my own was equally to keep them secret. There were too many English-speaking natives (and not a few spies) in our camp to make it safe to utter a word as to our future movements. Amongst the latter was Kobina Foli, the heir to the Adansi stool, who had voluntarily given himself up when Inkanza, the King, raised the flag of rebellion; and although I must own he had given no specific cause for suspicion, yet he was too acute a man to be thoroughly trusted, and, I believed, was trying to play a double game. Until the morning of the 13th July, therefore, I kept my secret well, but to do this I was obliged to make many very coloured statements to the King. Not less than five times in a day did he either come personally, or send through his faithful friend the missionary Jones, inquiring when I would start to attack Kokofu. This place was a veritable thorn in the side of Bekwai; never friendly, at this time the Kokofus' dearest wish was the destruction of Bekwai for having assisted us so long. The King knew this, and was most anxious that before attacking the Kumassis we should settle with Kokofu, and thus ensure his own safety and that of his chief town. The loyalty of Bekwai, on the other hand, was most essential to us, until such time as Kumassi was relieved, after which we could promptly deal with Kokofu.

How to balance the two was the immediate business in hand, and I really felt quite an expert diplomatist, as I soothed the old Chief down, and persuaded him that the destruction of Kokofu was a matter which never escaped my thoughts. An African may be thickheaded in most things, but he is very hard to get round under certain circumstances, and I found it no easy task to evade many of his questions. After much conversation one morning, he said very decidedly to me, "Tell me, sir, are you first going to attack Kumassi or

Kokofu? I believe your word, and you would rather lose both than speak what is not true." This was a puzzler, but as I had already decided to a make feint next day I was able to reply promptly, "Send word through spies to Kokofu that to-morrow the white man will advance against him, and woe be to that people, for God has forsaken them." I did advance next day, but it was only as a reconnaissance, which I shall presently relate; however, I had kept my word.

In Bekwai, at this time, was a European mining gentleman, Denhe by name; he had travelled between Bekwai and Kumassi through the village of Pekki, and was acquainted with the road. It was not shown on any map, nor mentioned in any documents in my possession. We agreed on a substantial reward if he would accompany the Column when the time came to move on Kumassi. Once I had secured his services, there was no longer the same need for the King's assistance, as before then I had feared his guides might mislead us, either from nervousness or doubt, or both combined. Nevertheless, I was very anxious to secure some of his men as scouts, to accompany our officers, and was therefore obliged to humour him and keep his war Captains quiet.

On the 11th July, in accordance with my promise to the Bekwai King, I moved out to Esumeja with a strong Force. From this post a Column, consisting of four hundred men and two guns, under command of Captain Carleton, West India Regiment, started in the direction of Kokofu, with orders to advance cautiously for half a mile, and to make a great point of cutting the bush and small trees and erecting very rough zerebas on either side of the path. No attempt was to be made to attack the town, or even get near it, as my intention was to let the enemy imagine we intended attacking them shortly, but were, so far, rather nervous of attempting it. The order was carried out by Carleton, and by evening we were all back in Bekwai. I felt rather small when the King called on me and inquired, in almost reproachful terms, if we had found Kokofu evacuated. However, I could afford to wait another thirty-six hours, by

which time the dusky Chief would know that the white man could occasionally play the game of bluff as well as himself. The ruse succeeded well, for his spies brought in word next evening that there was great jubilation in the vicinity of Kokofu, and that two thousand Ashantis from the Kumassi main stockades had been called down to defend the place and teach us a lesson. I almost laughed as the missionary Jones interpreted in solemn tones the King's speech: "Oh, sir, why did you not attack them this morning and entirely destroy the devils? Now it will be an altogether dangerous task." Wait, friend Jones; not so difficult as you imagine! Only a few more white lies, and you and your King will dance with joy.

The 12th July was to be our last day in Bekwai, and the next, it was hoped by our ally, would be the one on which Kokofu would fall and Bekwai be free. There was naturally plenty to be done; from dawn till dark officers and men toiled incessantly preparing for the move north. I held a parade of the garrison, at which the King and all his Chiefs were present. As I scanned the faces of white and black men—Hausa, Yoruba, Mendi, Timini, and others—there passed through my mind a feeling of stern joy that it should at last have fallen to my lot also to take a share, however small, in my country's history. The white faces were paler than ever, tropical fever stamped on every feature; strong men shook under ague, old officers betrayed but little feeling except that of determination, young officers had the joy of strife visible in their sallow faces, and the faithful black men looked inquiringly at their leaders and found no cause to feel doubtful of the end. From an adjacent mound the King of Bekwai watched the proceedings, and no doubt felt satisfied that twenty-four hours more would see the same ranks weltering through the streets of the hated town of Kokofu. The parade over, the British officers and non-commissioned officers assembled in the stockade enclosure, and I told them of my plans, but not the direction which the Column was to take next day; this must wait yet a few hours, so as to allow another thousand or two of the enemy to trek

away from Kumassi in the direction of Kokofu, for by this time they were quite convinced that was to be our first objective.

The important question of supplies only remained to be finally settled, and, fortunately for us, there was with the Force a young officer whose name was already familiar to those who had served on the Niger, and who was, during this campaign, to prove his value in the Field. Lieutenant (now Major) Willans, of the Army Service Corps, had volunteered for and been appointed to the West African Frontier Force in Northern Nigeria, and when I wanted a Chief Supply and Transport officer I asked Lugard for his services, which were readily given. Full of energy and common sense, Willans never failed me from start to finish in Ashanti; and when it is remembered that he had under his control, at various times, some fifteen thousand carriers over a Line of communications of one hundred and forty-five miles, it will be understood how much depended on his exertions. For the thousand fighting men and seventeen hundred carriers there was rice and salt sufficient for four days' rations on reduced scale; for the sixty white men of all ranks we could only muster three days' full rations. These, of course, were exclusive of six weeks' supplies for six Europeans and a hundred and sixty-five fighting men, who were to form the temporary garrison of Kumassi after it was relieved, and until the enemy had been cleared out from the south and east and the road opened; after which time I intended to establish headquarters permanently in the old capital itself. I knew that we could not get to Kumassi and back to Bekwai under six days at the least, and this only allowed of one day's halt in the Fort, and took no count of our being delayed by the enemy. It was, however, no time for calculating on such possibilities. All private supplies were therefore requisitioned and put into a common heap, from which they were equally divided between the Europeans, allowing of a full ration of one kind or another for four days, which must perforce be made very elastic for the nonce. At Bekwai and Esumeja remained just sufficient food to keep

the garrisons going until the arrival of a convoy expected up from the Prah *via* Obuassi Gold Mines.

Towards evening I called together all the officers and Europeans, and spoke a few words to them. It was, I firmly believe, a very solemn occasion to us all, for there was much that might happen within the next forty-eight hours, and there were not a few who had grave misgivings as to the results of our operations. For myself I confess I felt a lump in the throat as I looked round at the much-overworked officers, most of whom were by this time suffering from fever. Happen what may in the years to come, I can personally never again go through the mental trials of those last few days. "Help us!" was ever ringing in our ears, and the whole situation depended on the reliability and discipline of a few hundred African soldiers. These I did not doubt; but that long laden column of unarmed carriers, without whose loads all else would be in vain; what would they do? how would they behave? Panic soon seizes such people, and sometimes spreads with amazing rapidity in the ranks of even well-trained black troops, and it was this and other thoughts combined that would thrust themselves on one, however unwelcome and undesirable they might be.

The night of the 12th July comes back vividly to the memory. Within the bamboo palisaded enclosure of Bekwai, some hundred and fifty yards in diameter, were massed over two thousand followers and their guards, whilst outside lay soldiers taking such rest as was possible. It began to rain at sundown and kept drizzling steadily till six a.m.; of shelter for the carriers there was absolutely none, and so hour after hour passed, whilst the uncomfortable creatures talked, or shouted, or sullenly sat still, waiting for dawn. What others did I cannot say; for my part I lay down till two a.m., when I sent for the King and his Chiefs and told them of my plans, and demanded that he should supply us with ten scouts to accompany the advanced guard and forty men to keep with the rear-guard. I put on an appearance of lightheartedness regarding the results of our move, and assured him Kumassi would be relieved in three



THE GENERAL ADDRESSING HIS OFFICERS

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days. Not a bit of it! the old Chieftain knew better; he entirely disapproved the scheme, and said I had deceived him. However, we soon settled matters when I said that for success in war it was absolutely necessary for a Commander to deceive even friends, when they would not trust him.

The War Captain of Pekki, who was present, volunteered to bring twenty men, and just after the sorely tried King had left my hut, he came in, and having assured himself that no one was listening, asked me in a whisper if he might cut off a few heads of the slain with which to adorn his war drums. I said it was a barbarous custom, and one we never practised; but he quickly replied, "I will only cut off the heads of dead men on this occasion." I knew better; dead or wounded, it was much the same to him; but it rather made one shiver to think what nature of men we were dealing with, friends and foes alike. It was now high time to give the final orders and let everyone know which was to be our route, and before daylight these matters had been settled, and all that remained was to make a start. It was a truly invigorating sight to see the officers and men falling in, in groups and by companies; even the carriers and hammock bearers appeared glad to be up and moving about after their damp bivouac. All were wet and many were hungry, but each man knew and realised that to-day there was a definite job to be performed; and it may only have been imagination, but when I saw sick and wounded soldiers, whom a year previously I had known as savage recruits, coming out of hospital and joining the ranks, many with swollen feet and ulcerated legs, it certainly seemed to me a good omen, and each man as he saluted and passed almost looked as if to say, "I too intend to take my share in the relief of Kumassi."

CHAPTER XIX

1900

THE RELIEF OF KUMASSI

SO at last we were actually on our final march to Kumassi. The descent from the stockade on the Pekki road was so slippery as to make it impossible to get on faster than a slow crawl, and nearly all of us had falls before we reached the bog below, where at least it was flat ground. With the Staff I stood for over two hours watching the long Column falling into its place and filing off into the forest. The King of Bekwai was not there. His heart had failed him; the last effort was too much for his nerves, and small blame to him; he was getting old, and the white man was a sore puzzle. Jones, the missionary, was also absent, and nearly all the bombastic War Captains found they had other pressing business on hand on this particular morning. The "point" has gone on well ahead, the advanced guard has followed in its proper order; the main body, the escort to carriers, and rear-guard are all ready and gradually taking up their positions. Take a good look round and you will find that those seventeen hundred unarmed men, all laden or sharing in carrying hammocks, ammunition, hospital stores, and rice bags, are slowly taking in the situation. They are given no time to think; busy officers and non-commissioned officers are watching them carefully. The Surgeons, the Supply and Transport subordinates, the head men of gangs are fast jostling them into their proper places, and almost before they realise what it all means, they are part of the Column and marching for Kumassi.

And, shortly, I may explain the why and wherefore of our route. A glance at the map will show that the main road from Cape Coast to Kumassi passes through Esumeja, which is three miles north-east of Bekwai; and two and a half miles east of Esumeja again, is the town of Kokofu. Should we not attack this latter town, the Ashantis believed, as I found ater on, that the only other route to the beleaguered Fort that we would attempt was by the main road, and this was strongly held and defended by stockades at intervals. They therefore had every reason to consider themselves comparatively safe from any surprise; but, like savages, they looked at matters from their own point of view only. Besides the main road there existed a forest path, at this time almost overgrown with jungle, which, leaving Bekwai in a north-westerly direction, led through the village of Pekki, the frontier Bekwai post on the Kumassi border. By taking this route, which was not shown on any map, and unknown to any European present except Mr. Denhe, a gold prospector, I felt sure we should not only entirely upset the plans of the enemy, but avoid his stockades until within a few miles of Kumassi. With this object, reports had been sedulously spread that Kokofu was to be attacked before any advance on Kumassi was attempted; whilst it was the Pekki road which was selected for the advance.

It was a weird day's march, and it would only weary the reader to describe again the thousand obstacles which barred our way; but to us who took part in it, it was thereafter a constant source of amazement how those thousands of human beings ever covered the fifteen miles in the time. As each company of soldiers and troop of carriers passed on, the mud was churned into a quagmire; holes became wells, and every yard of path had to be trodden with care. Several large streams had to be crossed, some of them neck deep, and the length of the Column at such places invariably increased, until about sundown we must have been covering over five miles of road. A halt was then called, and before darkness fell the carriers had closed up fairly well. In

marches of this description, when time means everything, and all other considerations must give way, the lot of the rear portion of a Column, especially the rear-guard, is a hard one. I do not suppose the effects of any halt during that day's march ever benefited them; long before they could close up it became imperative for the advance to continue, if we meant to reach Pekki, a distance of fifteen miles. It gives some idea of the difficulties of competing against time when it is remembered that starting before daylight, and moving at the highest possible rate consistent with military precautions, the rear-guard only got into Pekki at 1.30 a.m. the following morning.

Once darkness had set in, all movements became doubly trying; officers and soldiers alike found it difficult to keep to the proper tracks, and the hammocks and ammunition boxes were constantly dropped; the latter especially suffered much, and many packages were broken. In some cases part of the reserve rations were looted, but fortunately this was quite exceptional, as I had issued an order that any man discovered stealing rice or tampering with rations, if caught red-handed would be immediately shot; and anyone suspected would be tried by court-martial, and if sentenced to death, such sentence would be confirmed. These orders were carefully explained to soldiers and carriers alike, and they knew full well they would be carried out. About three miles before we reached Pekki I was being carried up a nasty nullah bank, when the hammock men came down, and I was landed at the bottom, and in the confusion dropped the stick which had been given me by my friend Booth, of the Northumberland Fusiliers, before leaving England, which was to be our last meeting. I did not discover the loss for five minutes or more, and by that time hundreds of carriers and others had passed over the spot; but I did not mean to lose my precious relic, and much to the disgust of the hammock men, turned back to look for it. Fortunately, by the aid of an electric lantern I had with me, I was successful, and once again moved on in triumph. I have always had a superstition about such things, and I should have been very unhappy

without my faithful stick, which was later on to render me signal service.

Immediately on arrival at Pekki I was visited by the Chief and some of his War Captains. They were delighted beyond words at our sudden appearance on the scene, and asked me to leave a small Force to protect them during our absence at Kumassi, but this, of course, I at once refused. They stated that a large body of Ashantis was in occupation of the Fetish town of Treda, only two miles from Pekki, and that these had a number of Lee-Metfords, Martini-Henrys, and Sniders with them. The Chief had captured two prisoners, who were brought before me, half dead with fear, and probably believing that their last hour had arrived and that they were being ushered into the final torture-chamber. Neither of these men would speak a word in reply to my questions, and so I tried an experiment which helped me considerably next day. I told them I intended to pardon and release them on condition they went straight to their own camp at Treda and informed their Chief that I would halt a day in Pekki before advancing, but would without fail attack them the third day, if they still persisted in resisting the white man. They were released accordingly, but would not move, as they believed it was only a case of prolonging the agony, and that as they left the door they would be murdered. I therefore accompanied them outside and had them led out past the picquets, and they soon disappeared in the direction of their camp.

In order to keep up the appearance of a halt, and also to give all ranks an opportunity of getting some sleep and food, orders were issued that we should not start before eight a.m. next morning. By two a.m. the last of the rear-guard had arrived; and notwithstanding their long day, the officers and men were very cheery and ready to start again at daybreak if necessary.

The relief Column, now on its march for Kumassi, consisted of sixty Europeans, including officers, non-commissioned officers, and a few civilians; the latter being either colonial officials or others whom I had managed to pick up at various places; one thousand fighting men made

up as follows: seven hundred West African Frontier Force from Northern Nigeria, my old battalions; two hundred West African Regiment from Sierra Leone, and fifty very good men of the Sierra Leone Frontier Police Battalion, since incorporated as regulars with the other West African colonial Forces. There were besides fifty gunners to man two ·75-millimètre 12½-pounder Vickers-Maxim quick-firing guns, and four 7-pounder guns, with a detachment of the West India Regiment, under a British non-commissioned officer. Forming part of the organisation of each company of the West African Frontier Force from Northern Nigeria was one ·303 Maxim gun, and we had with us six of these invaluable weapons. It will be seen that the comparative strength in guns of modern type was exceedingly high. Sir Frederick Lugard, with his knowledge of African warfare, had from the earliest days of the existence of the Force insisted on this proportion, and I was now to reap the benefit of his foresight.

At eight a.m. the advanced guard, consisting of the Sierra Leone Frontier men, under command of Lieutenant Edwards, and one company of Niger Yorubas, under Captain Eden, of the Oxfordshire Light Infantry, moved quietly out of Pekki, and covering its front and flanks with scouts advanced towards Treda. With the Staff I was with the head of the main body, which in bush warfare means being close up to the front. It was with feelings of almost childish delight we all felt that at last had come the day when the sound of our guns would surely reach the ears of that small devoted band, who must be listening with ever-increasing anxiety for some such welcome indication that England had not forgotten them in their hour of trial. The tension on the nerves in bush fighting is very great, and in Ashanti it was much increased by the fact that you never had any kind of warning of the presence of the enemy until you were actually on them. The forest is left entirely untouched to their front, and I know of no people who can so long restrain themselves and wait in such absolute silence before opening fire. The consequence is their first volleys are very startling and trying

to young soldiers. Another thing that, far from being a drawback, is an advantage to them, is the possession of old rifles. These they fill with slugs and bits of iron, and although mortal wounds are much rarer than from single bullets, on the other hand the numbers of wounded are far larger than they would otherwise be; and wounds of any kind soon fester and cause much suffering in that climate.

Presently from the front comes the sound of volleys, followed by rapid independent fire, and then the whirr! whirr! of those dainty Maxims. Well done, Ashantis! Prove yourselves men; but as sure as you live, this is the last day you will behold with your eyes your favourite Fetish town; your sacred sacrificial groves, planted with so much care, have cast their last shadows, and the beautiful trees for no fault of their own must to-day be ruthlessly cut down, and your devilish temple be destroyed with fire. I doubled to the front, and arrived just in time to see the 7-pounder guns ready for action. There was one on the main path and another just off it with a clear field to the front, but no attempt was being made to open fire. Running up to the section, I found that the men of the West India Regiment had mounted the gun upside down; they were young soldiers and soon set matters right, but too late to do anything in the fight that was now going on all round the south and west of the outlying houses.

Eden and Edwards discovered soon after the first shots had been fired by the enemy's scouts, that they had been totally surprised, and this was soon apparent, as the approach to Treda was, unlike most others in the country, very broad and comparatively open, the bush and grass having been cut away. The houses appeared on the sky line of the high ground, and smoke was rising. Eden also noticed that numbers of sheep were being driven away, and that armed men kept running from one part of the village to another; all these were certain signs that they had been taken unawares and were quite unprepared. However, in a most defiant manner the war drums beat to arms, and a sharp fire was kept up from all the rising ground to our front. It

would be a good beginning if the Yorubas and Mendis were now given a chance with the bayonet before the foe could recover himself, and Eden and Edwards decided to do it without loss of time; officers and British non-commissioned officers leading, the bugles and drums stirring the blood, and the black soldiers cheering lustily rushed up the glacis, through the surrounding scrub, and were into the town on the heels of the enemy; it was all over in a few minutes and Treda was ours. Sheep and goats, fowls, and some corn and other eatables were found in fair plenty, and hungry men were ready for another rush, if for no other reason, at least in the hope of filling their empty stomachs before nightfall.

We halted for half an hour, during which time the Fetish temple was set on fire and many sacrificial trees cut down; the group of villages was also set on fire, but the total destruction of the place was reserved for our return journey four days later. Treda had been a particularly truculent village, and was a great eyesore to the loyal Bekwais; the people, moreover, had taken several Bekwai prisoners and beheaded them, and they therefore thoroughly understood the punishment. The temple was far the best I saw in the country; it was solidly built, and decorated with all kinds of European ornaments and hangings; lamps and coloured globes depended from the ceiling, and carved doors barred the entrance; the surrounding space was large, and the sacred trees had been regularly and carefully laid out. Our casualties were trifling, one man dangerously wounded and three slightly; but the moral effect was great, and the men began singing and dancing in a most extraordinary manner, and were quite eager to get on.

After leaving Treda the forest became very dense, but every now and again we came on large open plantations, sometimes half a mile in extent; these were full of plaintains, unfortunately still green, but they afforded food of a kind, which was most welcome; there was also a fair supply of sweet potatoes and yams in some of the farms. Pushing on as quickly as the boggy paths would admit, we passed two

or three deserted villages; in one of these we found a Hausa who had been captured from Sir Frederic Hodgson's Column when retreating south; he was very near his end from hunger, but had not been otherwise maltreated. In another village I saw a young child of some two years of age; poor little thing, it sat in a corner of a room and shrieked if anyone approached it. I suppose the mother must have been absent when we appeared on the scene, and thus been unable to take it away. I threw it some bread and put a cup of tinned milk near the door, and a sentry stood there till the rear-guard had passed. Strange to say, on our return I found the poor little creature dead just where it had been sitting and the food untouched. Either superstitious fear had frightened the mother, and she never returned to the village, or more probably the men had told her we always killed children. It was a sad sight.

The advanced guard moved very slowly this day; carefully searching every nullah and hillock, peering down every avenue and possible hiding-place; cutting away creepers or removing obstructions. Every now and again firing broke out from some portion of the Column, the angry rejoinder to any attempts of the enemy to get at our carriers; once or twice a machine-gun was set on its tripod on a spot where the Ashantis appeared busy, and its snapping rattle proved sufficient to clear them out. So slow was the progress that by sundown the column had only reached a village called Ekwanta,[1] six miles from Treda, and still five from Kumassi; but the delay was worth it, for of those seventeen hundred carriers not one had been killed or harmed in any way, and only five soldiers had been wounded, and this gave great confidence to the followers of all classes. Soon after dark the rear-guard got in, and, notwithstanding it rained heavily at night, everyone had some rest.

We left Ekwanta at daybreak on the 15th July. With the advanced guard was Major Melliss, of the Indian Army, attached at his own request for the day. It was the usual soaking morning, but it seemed fairly bright to us, for we

[1] Not to be confused with N'Kwanta on Sir Frederic Hodgson's route.

knew it was to be the last day of anxiety. The previous evening we had fired three shots from the 12½-pounder guns, and felt certain that they must have been heard in the Fort (this turned out correct). A mile is past, and yet another, and no signs of an enemy; two villages are left behind us, and Kumassi can only be three miles distant. It was a horrid feeling, this marching into and against the invisible. Was there an enemy, or had he vanished? Had any sound ever been heard in these vast halls of nature's domain, or had it ever thus been silent and weird? Everyone was thinking; none spoke; it appeared as if each individual imagined he heard a sound, but could not locate it. I have no desire to spend another such day. I called a halt to allow the long Column to close up, and we sat down as quietly as we had moved; the silence was indeed strange, and it was a positive relief when at last the well-known sound of a Dane gun broke the stillness; we were on our legs in a moment; we knew it was only an enemy's signal gun, but at least it proved there were human beings about, and that we were, indeed, in the land of the living.

Again we move on until the glad sound of hundreds of guns all along our left flank wakes us to reality; this, too, soon ceases, for the enemy is finding out he cannot inflict his hornet stings with impunity; he cannot fire a shot, but back go twenty in reply; he cannot rush the baggage, for extended along it are vigilant Maxims, which sweep with a wide swinging fire his most hidden recesses, and follow him along his secret paths. It was three o'clock, and only a few hours of daylight remained; I passed the word up to increase the pace slightly, but before the order could reach the scouts, what I least desired took place: the rear-guard was heavily attacked. In command of it, however, was a good soldier, Major Beddoes, of the Dublin Fusiliers, and he was there for a purpose. The enemy, seeing our advanced guard was too strong, determined to rush the hospital and rice carriers. One of the Chiefs, who later on surrendered in Kumassi, told me that they felt convinced they could cause a panic amongst these men, which might result in the loss of

our most precious belongings, and that they partly succeeded shows they had some cause for this belief. The King of Bekwai had sent fifty of his men to act as scouts, but I found them worse than useless, so they were attached to the rear-guard, and immediately the enemy opened fire these worthies discharged their guns into the air and made a bolt for protection towards the Maxim; their rush carried along some two hundred carriers, many of whom threw their loads and ran for dear life. Beddoes knew his work, and he and his officers soon restored order, whilst cordite and lead sent the Ashantis back to cover faster than they had come. So continuous was the firing in the rear that I sent Colonel Burroughs back to see personally what was going on, and to inform Beddoes that at any cost he must move up, as night would soon be on us.

Meantime the main body had closed up fairly well, leaving a gap of a full mile between themselves and the rear-guard; this was the enemy's chance had he been able to take it; but in this kind of warfare it is as difficult for one side as the other to grasp the situation. Here especially not only had the attack on the carriers been repulsed, but we were fast approaching the stockades, the last barrier between ourselves and Kumassi Fort, and it was time for the Ashantis to be there in force, if they still wished to bar our way. Between two doubts they lost their one great opportunity of the day, and an hour later Beddoes had covered the gap and was again well closed up. In every form of campaigning luck must play a part, and we were very lucky this day, for I learnt later that when the enemy found we were marching to Kumassi *viâ* Pekki, they hurried back from Kokofu, and a large number of them were at this very moment moving up the main road on our right flank, but hearing the heavy firing, they wheeled to their left and came on the rear-guard fight. It was now a mere chance whether they kept to their left or right; fortunately they moved left, not knowing it was the rear-guard alone they were engaged with, and thus got behind Beddoes; had they moved to their right, they would have found themselves between our

main body and rear-guard, and caused us much trouble, if no worse.

The difficulty of maintaining touch along a lengthy Column in this forest country was very well illustrated here; during our advance we were obliged to use bugle calls, as words of command not only travelled exceedingly slowly, but were frequently mutilated or misunderstood. The new bugle call to denote the advance, which had recently been introduced, was mistaken over and over again for the halt; shut in as sound was beneath great trees or having to travel through high grass, etc. As a remedy I ordered the old bugle call for the advance, which, being absolutely different, could not be mistaken. On this particular occasion, as the enemy was known to be in our immediate front and it was only a matter of minutes when he might open fire, I sent an order to the advanced guard not to use the bugle, but pass down for information any commands that might be issued. Shortly after this a bugler somewhere in the Column sounded the halt, and the word was passed to the front. From what cause it was not discovered, but presently a word-message came along, "We are all surrounded." Not understanding what could be meant, an order was sent to repeat the words, and again, after considerable delay, came the message, "We're all surrounded." Eventually the right interpretation arrived; it was only to say the advanced guard was waiting for orders, as "the halt has sounded"; "all surrounded" and "'alt as sounded" are not very dissimilar, and the one had easily been substituted for the other in the process of passing down the Column.

About a quarter-past four the advanced scouts found themselves in front of a stockade built across the Pekki road; as usual, no trace of it was to be seen from our side, but freshly cut tendrils and small trees to our right indicated that the enemy was in that direction also, and we found later on the reason for this clearance, which was to give them a view of our flank as we advanced. Their chief defences had been constructed across the main Kumassi-Cape Coast road, by which alone they believed we should advance, and in that

direction they had really strong stockades flanked and re-flanked by others; there also was their large War Camp, whilst the stockades actually now in our front were much smaller, and had in reality been built to prevent the garrison from making sorties.

When at the last moment they found that we were advancing by a road which would bring us on the flank of their main stockades, they found there was no time left to strengthen their smaller defences, and they therefore hurriedly cleared the ground between the various works in order to bring a cross fire on us.

It was a glorious roar which greeted our ears as the enemy opened with every gun and rifle they possessed; it was the best moment of my life, and nothing can again equal it. It was not merely the fact of having at last a stand-up fight, but it was the satisfaction of having been able to bring off this fight within hail of Kumassi, provided with the requisites necessary for success, and withal having succeeded in being there in time. It is in no boastful spirit that I write, but with a feeling that most of these things could not have been done without the loyal co-operation of officers and men, and it was something to feel proud of, that in that Column I do not believe there was one who had not done his very best to help.

Almost at the first volley Major Melliss and Lieutenant Edwards were both wounded and several men hit, and in a few moments the fighting in the front became general. Lieutenant-Colonel Wilkinson was in command of the advanced guard, and immediately brought up the quick-firing 12½-pounder guns, which were placed near the road and facing a stockade from which came a well-sustained fire. To the right of these guns was one 7-pounder, and extending the artillery line still to the right were two more 7-pounders facing the new cuttings made by the enemy. I had ordered Wilkinson to concentrate not only all his Field-guns, but his Maxim machine-guns as well, and to rain in shell and bullets as soon as the position of the stockades could be ascertained; the object was to oblige the enemy to keep under cover

whilst we extended and enveloped his flank. As the firing in our front increased, so the hundreds of carriers moved on quicker, doubling and closing up, and then as they found their progress blocked they lay down flat, quickly raising shelters of ammunition boxes, grain bags, etc.; they had by this time become great experts at all this, and to-day behaved very well and without much confusion.

Hurrying to the front I found was no easy matter, for the road was blocked with soldiers and carriers, many of whom I ran over as they lay on the ground; but when all these had been passed I found myself in a comparatively open space, which had been cleared and trodden down by the advanced guard. Every gun was by this time in action, and about two companies of Infantry were facing the stockades and some rising ground on our right, from which came a steady fire, and which we afterwards found was the War Camp. Notwithstanding our fire, which was exceedingly heavy, the enemy showed no signs of being silenced; on the contrary, shortly after I got up to the guns the fire increased, and had it not been nearly all too high must have caused us many casualties, for they were behind good cover, whilst we, of course, were in the open; on the other hand, as an Ashanti told me afterwards, they dared not rise to fire over the stockades which were not loopholed. At this time the Infantry had not been sufficiently extended, but were formed more or less in close order scattered along the front. My object was to extend all the troops of the advanced guard and main body under cover of our shell and Maxim fire, leaving the carriers temporarily to the care of the rear-guard, and as soon as this was attained to order a general bayonet charge.

Orders were issued accordingly and were being carried out, when there occurred a scene of confusion, which for a few minutes appeared to me to be the beginning of a panic, but which I quickly discovered was caused by a wrong order from a Company Commander. On the right of the guns were extended two companies of Niger Yorubas, and a similar number were ordered up from the rear to prolong the line to

the left, where one company was already extending. The men hurried up to the front, but instead of going left, made an attempt to extend to the right of the guns, where they suddenly came under a sharp fire, and also found themselves getting in front of our own Maxims; no sooner was the mistake discovered than their officers shouted to them to retire, and the whole company came dashing in. It was just then I noticed this movement, and was sorely puzzled; but the men quite took in the situation, and, rapidly clearing the rear of the massed guns, turned to the right and took up the extension. It was in reality a very smart piece of work. By this time the Yoruba companies were fully extended on our right, with their flank well thrown back, the general direction being almost parallel with the alignment of the enemy's main road defences and War Camps; the guns still kept their first position, and, well commanded by Lieutenant Phillips, were putting shell after shell either into or just over the stockades. On the left Captain Eden with other Yoruba companies, Major Melliss, Edwards and his Sierra Leone men were fast clearing the bush and prolonging the line, which extended over five hundred or six hundred yards.

At this time practically the entire fighting line consisted of Yorubas of the West African Frontier Force, whom I had purposely placed in the post of honour this day; but in order still further to increase the number of bayonets, I brought up a company of the West African Regiment and wedged them in between the guns and the Maxims, which latter then ceased fire, allowing the company to extend. The supreme moment had at last arrived, and I told Phillips to keep up the heaviest possible fire from his 12½-pounders for a minute, after which I would sound the cease fire and charge. Shall I ever forget the strain of that brief minute? I looked along the lines of Infantry, and then in the direction of the enemy's stockades, from which rose volumes of smoke, and perhaps for a moment I wondered if the black soldiers would charge straight into it all; and then I ordered the massed buglers to sound the "Cease fire." It was a good omen that with

one accord each company appeared to take it up immediately, and in an instant that tornado of lead and fire was converted into silence. It evidently acted in a strange manner on the enemy, for with us he ceased fire also.

As soon as firing had ceased the drums and bugles took up the "Charge," the finest music my ears shall ever hear; like a wave up rose the ranks, and in an instant all misgivings vanished as to their worthiness to perform the task. There was no doubt now; no Ashanti ever born would stand before that long line of steel. First, as ever, the British officers lead the way. Away they all go, over obstacles and through almost impenetrable jungle, some at a rush, others at the double, according to what is in their front; but there is no hesitation, all have their heads turned in the right direction.

At one point only did I see any delay, and that was in the company to the right of the guns; before them was an exceedingly thorny entanglement, and the men were attempting to cut this away instead of somehow rushing through or round it. So long did the operation take that I began to think this portion of the line would not be in time to join in the charge at all, and this would have caused a serious break in the general alignment. I had with me thirty picked men from various corps as a body-guard and small reserve, and Captain Holford, 7th Hussars, who was standing by me, volunteered to lead these round by a flank; I at once gave permission, and it was a cheering sight to see them dash into the scrub. As soon as the men of the company in question saw this and realised that there was a way round, they joined Holford's party; and, turning round to see who was near me, I found myself absolutely alone and not a soldier in sight, except my faithful orderlies, Sergeant Alyo (once in the ranks of the French Senegalese army), and the Hausa Ahmedu Kano. The prospect of a charge had been too much for my Staff, every one of whom had joined Holford and gone off in pursuit of the foe; some of them soon returned and rejoined me, but it was interesting to have seen their zeal. Rather an amusing incident occurred here,



THE ATTACK ON THE LAST STOCKADE BEFORE KUMASSI

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for when I found myself alone I turned to Sergeant Alyo and said, "Where is the Staff?" Pointing to himself, he promptly replied in French, which he always spoke, "Voilà c'est moi." He was, indeed, the sole representative for the moment.

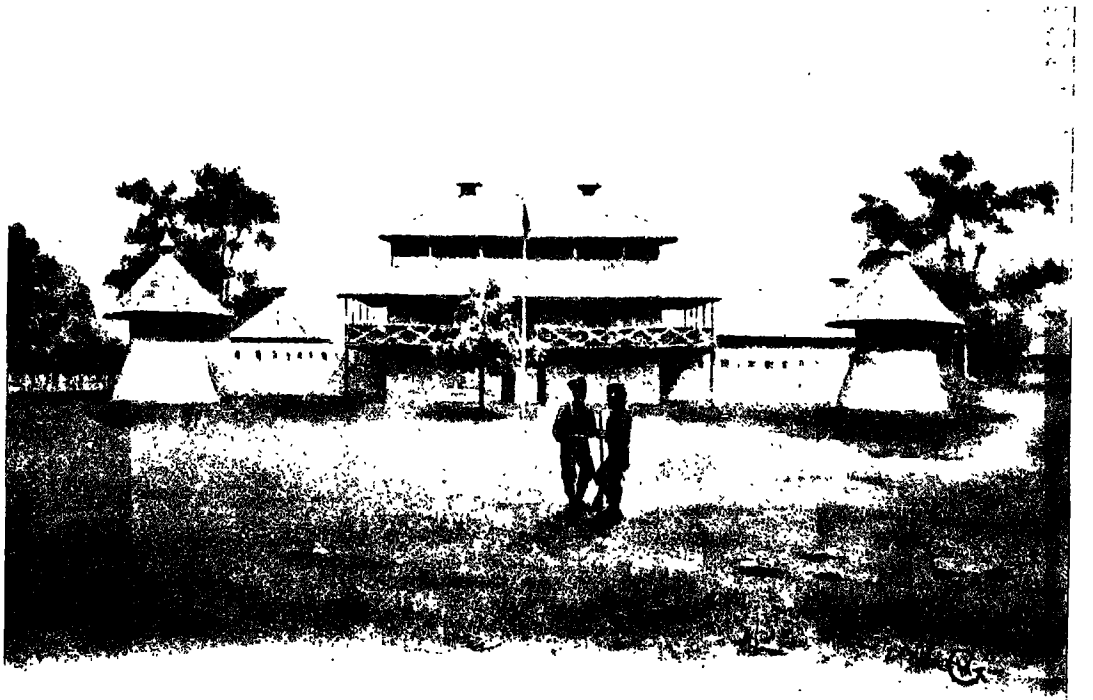
The charge had been more than a success, it had driven the Ashantis pell-mell in headlong flight, and when I reached the last stockade on the Pekki road our long lines had advanced over and beyond this, and I could hear the hurrahs of the men well towards Kumassi Fort. Holford had just been in time to come on the rear of the enemy; he killed two himself, one of whom was firing at him at close quarters. Amongst many who did splendid service this day prominently stand out the names of Captain Eden, who led the Yorubas on our left; the brave Melliss and Edwards, who guided the scouts, a most risky and nerve-trying duty in bush warfare; Lieutenant Phillips, Royal Artillery; Beddoes, who commanded the rear-guard; and Wright, of the Manchester Regiment, who was in command of the right flank attack. Each and all of them I shall remember through life, for our friendship was sealed on that July evening. And now the enemy had disappeared, and nothing remained between us and Kumassi. As I sat on the stockade timbers, which were drilled with shell, and looked at the lifeless forms lying behind them, it was impossible not to admire the gallantry of these savages, who could stand up against the most modern guns and rifles, and refuse to retire until white men themselves led the charge against them.

The bugles gave out the "Assembly," and within half an hour the scattered units had been collected. Scouts were out on all sides; carriers and hammock men fell in as if they had been trained soldiers; officers and men appeared jubilant, and all traces of fatigue had, temporarily at least, disappeared. Our losses were exceedingly small, considering the numbers of the enemy, which, of course, it is impossible to estimate correctly; but it may reasonably be supposed that besides the five thousand men who usually guarded the main road, there must have been many thousands from the other stockades

surrounding Kumassi, either on our flanks waiting the issue of the fight, or in reserve nearer the Fort. We had two men killed and two officers and twenty men wounded.

Five minutes' marching brought us to the main road (the one by which our arrival had been expected) and in rear of their chief stockade, which extended for some hundred and twenty yards, and was massively and skilfully built, being supported on both flanks by smaller works. It was a satisfaction to look back at these and imagine the disgust of the enemy at the unchivalrous conduct of the white man in having come round a flank instead of attacking them direct in the good old style.

At the junction of the Pekki and main roads the forest ended, and we emerged into the clearing round Kumassi. The relief of again being in open country is difficult to describe; everyone appeared to be inhaling fresh air, though it was tainted enough, as I shall soon describe; but the clothes on our backs and the boots on our feet were literally going to pieces. Few of us had been able to manage a proper wash, whilst for three days we had been wading through mire, and marching under almost continual heavy rain which soaked us to the skin. Was it matter for surprise, then, that we looked up into God's open sky and thanked Him that we should again have been permitted to see the glorious sunlight? I remember at the last short halt before reaching the stockades, one of my Staff officers, who had had little sleep or rest of any kind for seventy-two hours, lay down in a pool of mud and water and was asleep in a moment. I felt obliged to wake him, poor fellow, which he resented with the remark, "I don't see much difference between this and other beds in Ashanti." The road from this point to the Fort is very broad, and had been kept in good order, and so with a wide front we swung along it; the scouts were almost running, and all ranks kept increasing their pace, until at the bottom of the last dip the entire Column broke into a double. I called a short halt, during which time everybody remained perfectly silent; all were listening to catch some sound from the Fort, which we knew



KUMASSI FORT

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was now only half a mile distant, but no sound reached us. Our hurrahs followed one another, but there was still no sign that our comrades were actually there; they were anxious moments, full of painful doubt. Could it be possible that the end had already come, and that we had after all been too late, and reaped a useless and barren victory? A very few minutes would reveal the truth.

Breasting the slope leading up to the plateau on which stands the Fort, we passed the ruined houses of traders and merchants. A few headless bodies lay on the track, and the stench told us how many more there must be in the high grass on either side of us; charred timbers, torn-down telegraph poles, and hundreds of empty gin bottles told the story of pillage and drunken debauchery that had for months past been going on. But this was no time for contemplation, and the oft-repeated and ringing cheers for the Queen seemed a set-off against any sights we might encounter. At last we top the slope, and there before us—praise be to God!—stands the Fort, still safe, and the flagstaff before its entrance gate. At the same time the notes of a bugle sounding the "General salute" reach our ears, and we know it is all well. Hurrying on we pass the sacred groves—foul mementoes of human sacrifices; on our right stand some of the last of the sacred trees, whilst all around us is desolation and ruin. From the parapets of the Fort hungry eyes are staring wildly at us, asking if in truth all this is reality or a dream; so often have they heard the booming of guns, and so often have been bitterly disappointed, that now when we are actually arrived, it is difficult to realise. The steel gates slide open; Captain Bishop, of the 3rd Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment, Lieutenant Ralph, of the Lagos Battalion, and Dr. Hay, of the Gold Coast Civil Service, followed by their faithful men, come out to greet us. The sallow, gaunt faces of the Europeans spoke of prolonged mental and bodily sufferings, whilst the gallant Hausas, by this time sadly diminished in numbers and covered with horrible sores and ulcers, proved by their appearance how well they had stood by their leaders. It was for all a happy meeting, and to the best of my ability

I told Bishop and his brave companions how the Queen would without doubt recognise their services, and I may here add that all were rewarded. Bishop was given a D.S.O., Ralph a direct commission as Captain in the Royal Fusiliers (a very rare honour), and Hay got a C.M.G.

By seven o'clock the rear-guard was in and had occupied such outlying buildings and barracks as had not been burnt by the enemy. Soon after our arrival bright flames shot up in the direction of Bantama; it was the last act of vandalism, and destroyed whatever houses remained there. Before leaving Bekwai I had arranged to fire five star-shells from the Fort at eight o'clock on the evening of the relief, and this signal, if seen, was to be passed on to Cape Coast and the news cabled to England. At this hour, therefore, the millimètre guns were drawn up outside the Fort, and as we watched the shells bursting high overhead and scattering their hundred brilliant stars, we knew that those at home would be rejoiced to hear of the safety of the brave defenders.

The next day, the 16th July, was spent in clearing the surroundings of the Fort, and they sadly needed it; for this purpose six hundred men and a thousand followers were detailed. The grass was growing high, in places within fifty yards of the walls; dead bodies in all stages of decomposition lay on every side, some actually under the bastions. In the garden, surrounded by rose bushes, many were discovered, and in one hut within eighty yards of the gate I counted eight corpses. The adjacent nullahs were indescribably horrible; in one near the jail over a hundred bodies had to be covered over with earth, and right down to the wells from which the only pure water could be obtained, rotting remains marked the scenes of death or carnage. Kumassi, as I first saw it, was the most loathsome place imaginable, and the operation of purifying it was a task which needed a strong digestion.

At the same time as this was being carried out, Colonel Burroughs with four hundred men proceeded along the main Cape Coast road and destroyed the stockades which we had

captured the previous day, thus ensuring our retirement next morning. He met with no opposition, which proved that the enemy had received a severe lesson, as all unknown to us at this time were many thousands of them in occupation of every other stockade round Kumassi. All through that night fires burnt brightly round the Fort; every hut and structure was set alight for purposes of purification, and the smell from charred corpses made sleep almost impossible.

During the evening I held a muster parade, when it was found that we had in hand only a half-ration of rice per man for this day, and nothing for the following day. I expected heavy fighting on the way out, with a much-diminished firing-line and a largely increased train of sick and helpless women and children, and how these masses were to be fed in case of any delay being caused was a serious matter; but the only thing to be done was to trust in luck; nothing else could then assist us, as food could only be obtained from farms and villages on the Pekki road.

At dawn on the 17th July the troops, with the exception of the new garrison under Captain Eden, who voluntarily remained in command, fell in and quietly moved off on their return journey to Bekwai by the same road we had entered. The pace was much quicker, as nearly all the carriers were unladen, and consequently each stretcher had ample spare men to help in carrying the sick and wounded. It was a motley crew. Immediately in front of me I had the old worn-out garrison, mostly in hammocks, and behind me were the women with children; these nearly all had small-pox and were in a horrible state of emaciation. As mile on mile was passed and not a shot fired, I felt these poor creatures were safe, and even their incessant crying and moaning, though monotonous, did not this day seem unpleasant. About two miles out from Kumassi the sound of Field-guns from the Fort could be heard, and we afterwards learnt that Eden had placed the garrison under cover and thus drawn on the enemy to explore the precincts of the Fort, which they began to think had been abandoned altogether. When a fair number had come out into the open, 7-pounders

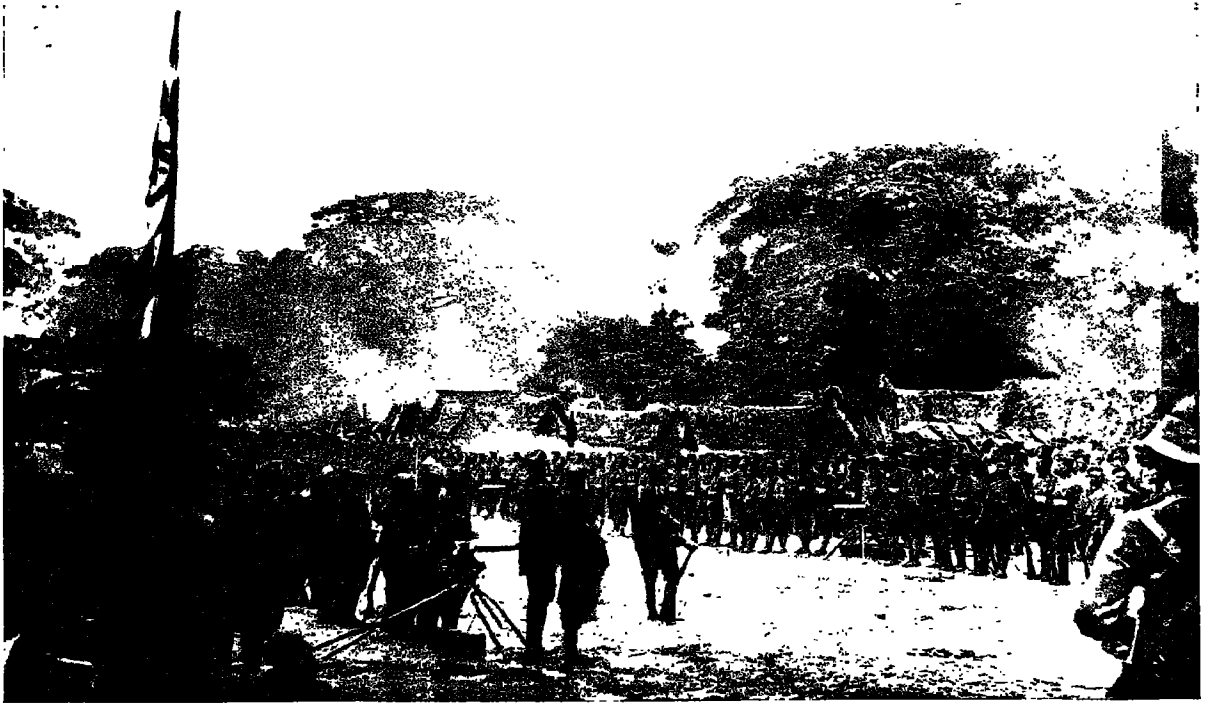
and Maxims were turned on them with excellent effect, and they did not forget the lesson.

During the marches of the 18th and 19th July we were enabled to destroy several large villages, and to consume much of the fruit and vegetables in the farms; on the latter day we re-entered Pekki, to the intense delight of the populace, and were back in Bekwai on the 19th. The seven days' incessant work had told on all ranks, and I felt they must now have a couple of days' rest before attacking Kokofu.

The new garrison of Kumassi consisted of a hundred and fifty-five men of the West African Frontier Force, and twenty gunners of the Gold Coast Battalion; there were also a few followers and Hausa traders who volunteered to remain, now that everything was perfectly safe; the Commander, Captain Eden, had under him two officers and two British non-commissioned officers, with provisions for fifty-four days and large quantities of reserve ammunition. His orders were to hold the Fort until reinforced by a fresh Column (which I intended sending up from Bekwai as soon as the Central African Regiment arrived), but not to venture out owing to the small number of men at his disposal; every Sunday evening signal star-shells were to be fired which would announce all was well with the garrison.

The day of my return to Bekwai, Lieutenant-Colonel Morland, of the 60th Rifles, arrived with reinforcements from Northern Nigeria, and I knew I had in him a strong man, on whom I could thoroughly rely; with him came a large convoy of provisions, as well as clothing and medical comforts, which were all urgently required.

It was now evident to the King of Bekwai and to the loyal Chiefs south of the River Prah that the rebellion was entering on its second phase. So far it had been the turn of the Ashantis to shut in the Queen's troops, to attack our convoys, cut our communications, and generally harass us; they now had to look to their own country and endeavour, if possible, to prevent its destruction. The long arm of England, notwithstanding all her immense trials in South Africa, and even in distant China, was gathering in from



I HAD A PARADE OF THE GARRISON

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many lands the requirements in men, sufficient to overrun entirely every spot in the hinterlands of Ashanti. Two days after our return from Kumassi a detachment of Sikhs and half a battalion of the Central African Regiment, who had come *viâ* the Cape, arrived at Cape Coast Castle; this same day fifteen hundred carriers sailed from East Africa for the same destination. Later on the 2nd Battalion Central African Regiment, coming round by sea, also joined the Force, and several thousand carriers were temporarily enlisted from various African colonies. Thus whilst on the plains of the Orange River and the highlands of Natal and the Transvaal were gathered the sons of Britain from every clime and sea, she had collected on a comparatively minute scale, but in a sense in the same spirit, in another part of the same continent, men of her subject races to fight her foes. The waters of the Prah were supplying drink to those whose homes were on the banks of the Indus, the Zambesi, and the Niger; the same roof was sheltering those who lived so far apart as the islands of Jamaica and the plains of the Punjab. I have often watched parties of Sikhs, Central Africans and West Africans, standing together in the market-place and fraternising; and I would sometimes go amongst them and amuse them by giving a word of command, when all would instantly obey; and then I would tell them that they were too clever for me, for whereas they all understood my language, I could not understand one half of theirs; they saw the joke, and would all have a laugh.

Whilst steam was bringing from various countries soldiers, carriers, and munitions of war, in the Colony itself we were gathering together such local Levies as loyal Chiefs could furnish. In June, Captain Benson, Shropshire Light Infantry, took charge of the Levies of Akim to the north-east of the upper Prah, and under his orders was Captain Wilcox, of the Gold Coast Battalion. Benson's orders were to move northwards and gradually approach Kumassi from the east, but to avoid becoming engaged with the Ashantis, and to watch my movements and then act as circumstances might dictate. Later on I sent him specific orders, but by that

time the timid Akims, headed by their cowardly King, had lost all semblance of discipline, and as I shall relate in its proper course, the advance ended in a serious disaster. At the same time Major Cramer, 3rd Battalion Highland Light Infantry, was raising two thousand Levies from Insuaim, in the country east of Prahsu, and with these he eventually advanced north towards Lake Busamakwe, through the Eastern Adansi country. Knowing that they would be worse than useless, unless employed along with our regular troops, Cramer wisely kept them back until our Columns were scouring Adansi, and again advanced when this country had been cleared. Whilst Benson and Cramer were moving towards the eastern portions of Ashanti and well on our right flank of the main Kumassi-Cape Coast road, on the western or left flank the levies of Denkera, numbering between three and four thousand, under command of their own King, and Captain Hall, Gold Coast Police, were mustering on the lower Prah. The King was very anxious to command them in person, and roam about as he pleased; but this could not be permitted, and Captain Wright, Manchester Regiment, was sent to control them and issue all orders. This Levy later on did excellent destructive work, but was quite dangerous to our own side, except when following well in rear of our Columns.

My plan of operations now was to make the enemy believe that it was still impossible for us to occupy Kumassi in strength, and thus to hold them in their War Camps round that Fort, whilst with strong flying Columns we scoured the country to the south and east of Bekwai, destroyed Kokofu, located and attacked the Adansi army, which was known to be still somewhere east of Dompoassi, and finally by marching through the main Adansi country to clear it of all rebels. These operations accomplished, a simultaneous advance would be made on Kumassi from the east, south-east, and south, and the enemy driven northwards, after which fresh movements could be made with our base in Kumassi itself, the entire Line of communications to the sea being open and telegraphic communication established. The net was, how-

ever, still far from closing in, and the severest fighting had yet to be done before the enemy could be induced to unite their strength and risk everything in one decisive fight. It was now the 20th July, but not till the 30th September, and then only after they had fought us in every direction, did they join hands north of Kumassi and suffer the last crushing defeat which ended their resistance and their hope.

CHAPTER XX

1900

DESTRUCTION OF KOKOFU—PUNISHMENT OF THE ADANSIS, ETC.—CAPTURE OF BANTAMA—EXPEDITION TO LAKE BUSAMAKWE, ETC.

BEKWAI town was at this time an abominable place to be quartered in; the sanitary arrangements were horrible, and with so many thousand people confined in a restricted space it was difficult to improve matters. However, with the aid of our P.M.O. and Captain Carleton, the Provost-Marshal, and his Staff, matters soon improved. Sore throats, colds, and coughs were the cause of much sickness amongst the Europeans, and we lost one officer, Lieutenant Payne, only a few days after his arrival from England. I myself was for some time quite prostrated with sore throat, and seldom managed to get more than half an hour's sleep at a time; most of the night I was obliged to sit upright, and I fear kept most of my next-door neighbours awake, although never one said a word or would acknowledge that this was the case. At last I got so bad that I determined to move from my permanent mud hut to a temporary bamboo one close by; it was then that one of the King's servants for the first time informed me I was living in a room in which two corpses had been buried only a month before; the custom is not uncommon in Ashanti, but I was not sorry to be warned in time. The overpowering smell at nights I had attributed to the filthy surroundings, but I now assigned it to the true cause, and as soon as I quitted my graveyard I felt better, and began to improve in health.

The hour for the chastisement of Kokofu, so long deferred, had come at last, and as the troops had had a couple of days'



LIEUTENANT-COLONEL MELLISS, V.C.
INDIAN ARMY

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rest after their return from Kumassi, I decided to attack it on the 22nd July. My intention had been to go in command myself, but I was anxious to give Colonel Morland a chance, for I knew and thoroughly appreciated his sterling qualities. I therefore offered him the command, although he was far from well, and was indeed in bed when I went to see him; however, in Ashanti a bad go of fever or other ailments could not be taken into consideration when duty had to be done, otherwise, I fear, we should never have been able to carry on at all. At dawn on the 22nd July Morland left Bekwai with eight hundred infantry, three 12½-pounder guns, two 7-pounder guns, and four ·303 Maxims. It was a very strong, compact Column, entirely unhampered by carriers or baggage; and as they were starting I said to one of my Staff, "That is the strongest fighting Column that can be properly used in this country, more men only hamper you."

I suppose the Kokofu commander was still resting on his laurels gained in our first reconnaissance of 11th July, or perhaps he had indulged too freely in the gin bottle; whichever was the case, he was caught napping, and that by a man who does not lose his opportunities. It was Morland's first fight in Ashanti, and he was determined it should be short and sharp. Placing Melliss with his Hausa company of the West African Frontier Force in advance, he distributed the remainder of his Force so as to give all corps an opportunity of sharing in the proceedings. It was not long before a burnt village (the scene of two previous attempts on Kokofu) was reached; it was found unoccupied, so after a short conference it was decided to carry the first stockade, which was believed to be not far distant, with a bayonet charge. Melliss again moved on, turned a corner, and began the descent of a long slope down to a stream; he had not gone far when the leading files saw the outlines of a large stockade well below them. Within a few moments all preparations were completed, and to the accompaniment of bugles and drum the Hausas, the men of the West African Regiment, Yorubas, and others were racing to be first over the timbers. The enemy had been surprised, so much, indeed, that they

had not time to occupy the works, but, seizing their arms, began a wild and useless fire from the surrounding bush and the ditches and trenches on the flanks; then, seeing that our men were on them, they began a clean stampede, which did not end until they had reached the palisaded enclosure of the town.

During this final rush the Hausa carriers attached to the 12½-pounder guns from Nigeria displayed great dash, running at top speed with their heavy burdens, which they practically heaved over the stockade, and then scrambling over themselves, were off again almost with the advanced guard. Lieutenant Grahame, of the Highland Light Infantry, was conspicuous during this affair, and Captain Bryan, Staff officer, as usual, was well to the fore. Morland gave the enemy no breathing time, but pushing his advantage and leaving the guns to follow, he launched all the leading companies in pursuit. Over a bank, down into a stream, up a steep slope, and under dark groves of bamboos, rushed the jubilant soldiers, whilst with even fleeter foot the foe was vanishing into his sheltering forests. Guns, rifles, furniture, household gods, every kind of Ashanti belongings were strewn in wild confusion all through the streets and for a mile beyond, marking the track of the fugitives and the completeness of their demoralisation.

Within two hours everything worth taking had been secured, the palisades set on fire, and Kokofu the proud was a blazing relic of the past. Thirty dead were counted, and owing to the complete surprise our own casualties for the only time in Ashanti were nil. I received the news about two hours before the Column re-entered Bekwai, and was so pleased that although I just then happened to be inspecting a newly arrived detachment, I, without thinking, chucked my helmet into the air, shouting "Well done, Morland!" I paraded my body-guard, who had by this time, as a special case (in order to impress the Chiefs), received their red zouave jackets, and taking command myself, I received Morland with a "general salute." He was looking ill and very pulled down, but was much gratified by the compliment, and

I felt it was deserved, for notwithstanding his illness, he had refused to surrender the command of the Column to anyone. To my regret, he was shortly afterwards invalided home, and I lost in him one of our best officers; his name has since become familiar to all who read of our empire work in West Africa, but we who knew him in 1900 felt sure that this could only be a matter of time. A curious case of dying of fright occurred this same evening; a prisoner had been captured—a remarkably fine, well-built man—and in order to secure him, his hands were tied, which to him apparently was a death signal; he therefore appealed to an officer to be spared from torture, and almost at once expired. The poor wretch had probably seen a good deal of cruelty practised in his day.

On the 26th July, to my intense surprise, I received a telegram direct from Her Majesty the Queen; it ran as follows: "Heartily congratulate you and all troops under your command on the relief of Coomassie, so ably carried out under exceptional difficulties.—V.R.I." How pleased and proud I felt that our good Queen had noticed so prominently the gallantry of the officers and her faithful black soldiers; from Osborne to Kumassi is a long cry, but here, within a week of our return, we all had the supreme satisfaction of having received her approval of our humble deeds. I read the telegram to the troops on parade, and had it translated into all the many dialects spoken by the different races composing the Field Force, and each clan as they heard it burst into cheers and wild shouts. After the troops had been dismissed, a Yoruba Sergeant came with some of his men, and asked me to show him the message. I did so, and he then inquired if it was the Queen's own writing, and to point out the place where her hand had rested. Honest fellow! he no doubt believed it had arrived in some mysterious manner. Her Majesty's telegram now rests in a frame made from one of the timbers taken out of the last stockade captured before relieving Kumassi, and is, needless to say, a most precious relic.

From home came many other telegrams; Lord Wolseley,

then Commander-in-Chief, sent his congratulations, and informed me that the Queen had been pleased to promote me Brevet Colonel. Mr. Chamberlain, who had more than once since the campaign commenced encouraged all ranks by short, stirring messages, wired his "hearty congratulations" on our successes "achieved in the face of almost insuperable difficulties," and in another telegram informed me that Her Majesty had promoted me K.C.M.G. Thus, through the admirable conduct of my British comrades, and the loyal devotion of our West African soldiers, I found myself honoured beyond all my dreams. Sir Frederic Hodgson was also kind enough to convey the thanks of the Government and the Legislative Council of the Colony to all ranks, and last, but not least, my good friend Lugard telegraphed a few heartfelt words. All these came as an extra stimulus, and acted like a break in the weather, which everybody appreciated, and which gave new life to the various punitive expeditions then on the eve of setting out.

The first business now on hand was to discover the whereabouts of the Adansi army, which was known to consist of some six thousand men, and to be somewhere east of Dompoassi and in the vicinity of the Moinsi hills. To attain this object I selected Major Beddoes, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, to command, and he left Bekwai on the 24th July with one 12½-pounder gun, one 7-pounder, and four hundred men of the West African Frontier Force from Northern Nigeria; with him also went a company of the West African Regiment, which was to form the garrison of Kwissa, and thus we again occupied this twice-abandoned Post on the direct Line of communications and re-established our hold of the main Kumassi-Cape Coast road. This was the final movement needed to complete our chain of Posts, and thenceforth two routes from the Prah to Kumassi were always available, and each was used as required. Near Kwissa, Beddoes captured a prisoner, who offered on promise of his freedom to lead the Column to the Adansi War Camp, in which he stated the King then was with all his Chiefs.

It was a very fortunate capture, for not only had we no

kind of clue as to the whereabouts of this Force, but the few Bekwai people who might have led us to it were far too frightened to do so. The Adansis at this time had established a reign of terror in their country, and this particular portion of it was absolutely unknown to us, and even neighbouring tribes seldom entered it. The prisoner knew that his life was at stake, and kept his word. On the 28th July the Column entered the stupendous forests at the foot of the Moinsi hills, south of Kwissa, and marching first in a south-easterly direction, turned north-east towards Yankoma, on the direct Kokofu-Insuaim road. It was a very risky movement, for with four hundred men not only had a large number of the enemy to be attacked, but during this process all communication was absolutely cut off, and whatever might happen, no kind of news could be received for some days at earliest. I aways think this march was one of the best bits of work done in Ashanti. It needs considerable nerve to cut yourself off from the world, and with only young soldiers to carve a way through unknown primeval forests, your sole guide being a native of the place, who would be only too glad to see you meet with disaster.

Moving rapidly the Column continued its march the next day, and arrived at night at a large village which was found unoccupied. Daylight of the 30th July saw them on the march again, but this day the Adansis meant to dispute the way, for hardly had the advanced guard got into its swing, when it was assailed in front and flank. A company was at once extended, and aided by two ·303 Maxim guns, gradually drove the enemy from his position, but not until it had become plain that the Adansis meant to contest every yard of the road, and this is not surprising when we know what we learnt later, viz. that with them was their idol "Bondor." I must here explain that this hideous conglomeration of human remains—blood, hair, bones, etc.—was carried about in a litter, strongly guarded and accompanied by the chief priest; it was the most sacred Fetish of Adansi, and later on was surrendered to and burnt by us. The coat worn by the high priest in charge, made of leopard skin and edged with

shells, is now in my possession.[1] The retirement was being very deliberately carried out by the Adansis, when Major Beddoes, who had gone up to the front to superintend affairs, was severely wounded in the thigh and disabled; Captain Greer, of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment, the next senior, then took over command, and in him fortunately we had a staunch, steady officer, who could be relied on to continue the work.

For a couple of miles after this the Column proceeded without meeting any opposition, and here the scouts reported that a stream with high banks was held by the enemy. The Maxim guns, which had been sent on to the head of the advanced guard, were quickly mounted on their tripods and opened fire, causing a panic in the ranks of the Adansis, who were unprepared for such a continuous rain of lead. Confusion ended in flight, and as our men advanced at the double, they passed over a large number of dead. Greer pushed on at once and found a very strong stockade blocking his advance; but the enemy had not had time to recover from their disorder, and fortunately it was unoccupied. Continuing the advance, the Column was shortly afterwards attacked by large bodies of the enemy, who advanced boldly to close quarters and showed no signs of timidity. The advanced and rear guards were both engaged, and all the Field-guns were obliged to open fire to ward off the determined rushes made on our flanks; one 7-pounder manned by a detachment of the West India Regiment was made a special mark, but the gunners behaved well, and met the enemy with so rapid a rifle fire that they made no more attempts in this direction.

During this fighting Lieutenant Phillips, R.A., was severely wounded, but held on in command long enough to see the enemy everywhere repulsed. Lieutenant Swabey, of

[1] A strange story is connected with this idol. Mr. Powell, an accountant in the employ of the Ashanti Gold Fields Corporation, disappeared in a most mysterious manner about eighteen months prior to the events now being related. No trace of him was found, and his disappearance was put down to this Fetish, which he was supposed to have desecrated whilst out surveying, by entering the grove at Paticol, the village where it was kept.

the West India Regiment, doing duty with the Niger Frontier Force, received a bullet in the side which entirely incapacitated him, and out of the small number of Europeans two others were wounded, viz. Captain Monck Mason, Royal Munster Fusiliers, and Colour-Sergeant Blair, Northumberland Fusiliers. Blair was a very pronounced Scotchman, a most pleasant comrade, and a first-rate specimen of a non-commissioned officer; his men loved him, but knew they must do their duty, or it would fare ill with them. Besides the officers twenty-five of the rank and file had been added to the list of casualties, and Greer was naturally anxious to push on in the hope of reaching some village before dark. A turning movement made by Captain Neal, Scottish Rifles, resulted in the retirement of the enemy, and once again the advance continued.

As I said before, with the numbers available it was a very risky experiment, this marching into the unknown, against such heavy odds without any kind of communication in rear, and had it been an isolated movement, it would have been matter for consideration whether it should have taken place at all; but I was aware that the Levies of Insuaim, under Major Cramer, were moving slowly from the Prah in the direction of Yankoma, near to which place Greer was now fighting; and although no reliance could be placed in their fighting powers, which were practically nil, I felt sure their presence on a flank, even though a two days' march away, would disconcert the Adansi King. He was anxious enough to meet the Insuaims by themselves, but he did not like the fact that there was with them a white officer; nor did he relish the possibility of a thorough defeat at Greer's hands, which would then let loose the Insuaims on his tracks. The Adansis therefore determined to offer battle at once, and at four p.m. Captain Greer found them ready for him. A really sharp fight followed, during which the enemy for a time not only held us at bay, but more than once tried to charge home. A 7-pounder gun which was temporarily disabled formed a tempting point of attack, and here the Adansis very nearly broke through the Column.

Their rush was met by a countercharge headed by Monck Mason with one company, and this was followed by a general onslaught; in every direction our men using the bayonet were in pursuit, and as darkness set in the enemy's large War Camp was captured, and showed by the number of dead how bravely it had been defended. The ·303 Maxims had proved most useful, and it was the shower of bullets from these weapons that finally demoralised the foe. Our total casualties amounted to thirty-five of all ranks, and the necessity of carrying so many, besides sick, prevented any further advance north. The Adansis had been taught a good lesson; their King fled northwards, and eventually the idol "Bondor" was surrendered. The Column reached Bekwai on 1st August, and I was glad to find Beddoes and the other wounded doing fairly well; most of them, however, had to be invalided home, and thus week by week I found myself minus some of the older and most experienced officers. This was particularly unfortunate in the case of the Niger battalions, as before the close of operations nearly every one of their officers had left, and West Africans will never work for strangers as they will for those whom they have served under. Owing to the numbers of officers who had gone from Nigeria to South Africa before the outbreak of hostilities in Ashanti, I had been obliged to retain the services of many who were due for leave to England; consequently most of those now serving had long since finished their term of service on the West Coast, and leave had become an absolute necessity for them, but nearly all volunteered to remain on; and it was only when climate and hard work combined made further residence impossible, that they reluctantly found themselves compelled to go, and their places were taken by newcomers unknown to the men.

The following day the first detachment of Sikhs arrived at Bekwai, and I met them at the main gate. As the leading files came up I greeted them with their own war cry, "Shri wa guru ji ka khalsa, shri wa guru ji ki fateh"; this was at once taken up by all the men, and thus in a moment, and

without introduction, we were joined in the bonds of brotherhood. The Sikhs were delighted to find that the Commander could talk their native language, and when I inspected them on parade two of them recognised me ; they had seen me on the North-West Frontier of India, when I was serving there as Assistant Adjutant-General.[1]

The Adansis had intended, after their defeat by Captain Greer near Yankoma, to cross the main road and assemble in the western portion of their country, south of Bekwai territory ; but this now became impossible, as the Levies of the King of Denkera, numbering about three thousand five hundred men, with one company of Niger troops, all under command of Captain Wright, had entered this portion of Adansi-land from the south, and, spreading over it like a swarm of locusts, had advanced in the direction of Dompoassi, eating up everything that the farms could produce and entirely clearing out the villages. An evil day had dawned on the land of King Inkanza, and his base treachery was receiving the punishment it well deserved.

The Denkeras arrived at Esumeja on the 5th August, and on this same day the telegraph line was completed between the sea and Bekwai. The Adansis had fled northwards, in the direction of Lake Busamakwe, and the wire remained intact to the end of operations.

Inkwanta Bissa, King of Denkera, was a remarkable character. I cannot better describe him than by saying that he was the most obstinate African I ever met, and would, if he had possessed absolute power in his country, have been the most tyrannical and unscrupulous of chiefs. Of powerful build, with eyes bloodshot from continuous indulgence in

[1] At the Delhi Durbar two years later many of these same men came in a body to see me, wearing their Ashanti medals, and we had a great talk of our doings. They described the Hausas and Yorubas as the "Bakri Paltan," or "Goat Regiment," because they said the men wanted neither food nor clothing, but, like goats in India, fed on whatever could be had as they travelled along the road. The Sikhs always spoke in the highest terms of the extraordinary endurance of the West African soldiers; and although, from having long served with the Central African regiments, they naturally preferred their own men, yet they left behind them many friends amongst the natives from the Niger.

alcohol, a heavy, shifting gait, and an unforgiving-looking face, he gave the idea of a typical specimen of what a savage ruler might be if left without the restraining hand of the white man. Yet when I got to know him, and after I had more than once been obliged to deal very summarily with him and some of his War Captains (a term used in the Gold Coast for military Commander), I found he had some good points. Before this discovery, however, we had several very stormy interviews; the first of which took place at Bekwai immediately after his undisciplined hordes had arrived at Esumeja. Captain Wright had reported that the King not only refused to allow his men to be commanded by a British officer, but had publicly told him to leave the camp. Wright had sufficient common sense to restrain his temper, or there might have been a serious fracas. On hearing this I wrote to the recalcitrant Chief and asked him to come over to my camp, but he point-blank refused. It was no time for arguing with men of his type, so I sent word to say I had received his message, but I was sure the interpreter must have misunderstood him, and repeated my request. This time I received a written refusal, and thereupon I sent an officer to inform him that if he did not immediately come over I should send an armed party to fetch him.

He arrived within two hours, and I shall not readily forget his appearance. From a silver-covered chair, carried by four men, stepped the Chief; a huge silk umbrella was borne over him, his fingers and toes were covered with massive gold rings, and a heavy gold chain was suspended round his neck. His eyes were almost scarlet, and he advanced with a look of contempt for our humble palm-leaf shed, which had to answer the purpose of a Durbar hall. Having offered his hand in rather a patronising manner, he lowered himself into a large, handsome chair, which one of his attendants brought in. The British officers were all standing, but he ordered in chairs for his own followers; this I at once stopped, and it had a good effect. I asked him to explain his treatment of Captain Wright, and he began in a loud,

blustering manner to lay down the law. I remarked that I was not deaf, and also that the only law just then was, perhaps, strange to him, but must, for the time being, be observed. Pointing to Wright, he said, "I will not allow my men to obey that fellow." At this stage of the proceedings I cut him short by remarking that if he did not alter his tone and speak respectfully of British officers I should have him summarily ejected from the town in presence of the Bekwai people.

He appeared quite dumbfounded, but by degrees grew calmer, and when he left he thoroughly understood that any further trouble from him would result in the disarmament of all his Levies, his own public disgrace, and immediate return to his country. He made one or two feeble attempts later on to get a free hand, but eventually settled down, and remained with us longer than any of the Chiefs, rendering really very useful service by clearing Ashanti farms whilst following our punitive Columns.

The suppression of the Adansis offered a favourable opportunity for strengthening the garrison of Kumassi, and as reinforcements had now arrived, I despatched, on the 4th August, a Column consisting of two 12½-pounder guns, two 7-pounder guns, and seven hundred and fifty men, under Lieutenant-Colonel Burroughs, Commandant of the West African Regiment, with orders to search the country in the immediate vicinity of the Fort and destroy any stockades that might be found, after which a hundred and fifty men were to be left as an addition to the garrison, with a total of ten British officers and non-commissioned officers. Fortunately we were then having a short break in the long rainy season, and Burroughs was able to reach Kumassi in two marches; he met with no opposition, but unfortunately one carrier was killed and four wounded by prowling bands, who waited at favourable spots and fired on the unarmed followers.

The day after his arrival in Kumassi, Burroughs sent out two columns of three hundred men each, under command of Majors Melliss and Cobbe, both of the Indian Staff Corps,

with orders to attack and destroy any stockades they might come across. It was not then known in the Fort that every road leading to it, except the Cape Coast route, which for some reason had been left alone since the relief of Kumassi, was held in strength by the enemy. The garrison had been unable to venture out, and beyond hearing drumming and seeing camp fires, nothing could be ascertained by them; it was therefore a considerable surprise when the above Columns found themselves face to face with stockades strongly occupied and stoutly defended. In fact, Burroughs had at first intended to send the same troops out once before, and again after midday, to destroy the barriers. The reasons for altering the orders will be seen.

Let us follow shortly the fortunes of each Column. Major Melliss had with him men of his own corps only, Hausas and Yorubas from the Niger, and one 12½-pounder Vickers-Maxim gun. Starting about ten a.m., he proceeded in a north-westerly direction along the Bantama road, and his scouts soon reported having seen a few of the enemy running out of that village. Half a mile further on was a very strong stockade across the road, but nothing could be seen by our scouts except the portion to their direct front, and this appeared to be some six feet above ground, and properly loopholed. To our right was almost impenetrable bush, and to the left high trees and thick undergrowth; but unseen behind these the entrenchments extended for some hundred yards on each side of the path, and as we found afterwards, were most scientifically designed, having excellent flanking fire in every direction, with the right thrown back in echelon. A nastier barrier it would be difficult to imagine, and it was, perhaps, as well that all this was not known to the assaulting companies. Melliss had long ere this discovered that the best method of attacking the Ashantis was with the bayonet, but here he was unable to carry out his favourite tactics, as the enemy poured in a well-directed fire through the loopholes, which were a new development in their defensive works.

A Maxim was at once run up to within a hundred yards of the timbers, and this was soon supplemented by a 12½-pounder gun; Colour-Sergeant Foster, Devonshire Regiment, was severely wounded almost as soon as he had got the Maxim into action, but still kept up the fire, whilst under cover of the Field-gun Melliss extended his men. This done, and after a quarter of an hour of rapid firing, he ordered the charge to be sounded; the bugler, a Hausa boy named Moma, had by this time been himself severely wounded in the head, but this did not stop him doing his duty, and Melliss leading the way, and being well followed by the men, was soon at the goal. With him were Captain Merrick, R.A., Captain Biss, Middlesex Regiment, and Colour-Sergeant Foster, bleeding from his wound; but the Ashantis were not going to run, without a struggle, before a handful of the Queen's soldiers led by a few white men, and awaited the charge.

Plucky fellows! for there could be but one ending to their rash decision. A fight at close quarters followed; Melliss, Merrick, and Colour-Sergeant Foster killed several, and the Niger Hausas, who had not had a clear chance for some time past, rushed in and completed the discomfiture. The enemy might easily have still turned the tables on us, for our men had only penetrated one point of the stockade, and this was well under fire of their own left; but their wings had become divided, and our officers, too eager to rush on, started in pursuit along the road; instead, therefore, of helping the enemy, our headlong action only disconcerted them, and once started, nothing could stop the flight. The War Camps and a large village beyond were soon in flames, and with a total of eleven casualties, including Melliss, Captain Biss,[1] and Colour-Sergeant Foster wounded, another formidable barrier had been destroyed, whilst the losses of the enemy were sufficient to stop them ever again attempting to reconstruct this work. I am glad to record that Bugler

[1] Captain Biss has written a very interesting story of Ashanti, *The Relief of Kumassi*. He has, however, from beginning to end given me far too much credit for my share in the work of the Expedition.

Moma received the Medal for Distinguished Conduct in the Field.

The congenial task of destroying the long line of entrenchments was still proceeding, when the sound of heavy firing on the Kintampo, or northern road, informed Melliss that Major Cobbe's Column, which had left a short time after his own, was also busily engaged. Cobbe had with him the detachment of Sikhs and his own Central Africans, both of whom were eager to see their first fight with Ashantis, and in addition he had a company of the West African Regiment. Hardly had his scouts reached the end of the clearings round the Fort when several shots warned them that the enemy was ready, and another five hundred yards brought them to the top of a plateau, facing a very strong stockade some three hundred yards in length. Contrary to the usual custom, this stockade had been built at the end of a long, straight avenue, and Cobbe was able to bring up his quick-firing 12½-pounder gun and deliberately shell it. Meantime his right front and left rear were being fired into, causing several casualties, including the Commander himself and Colour-Sergeant Rose, Royal Welch Fusiliers, doing duty with the West African Regiment.

The gun and Maxims, assisted by the fire of the West African Company, were all this time engaging the attention of the enemy to our direct front, whilst Cobbe, with a detachment of Sikhs, under Captain Godfrey, Indian Staff Corps, and two companies of Central Africans, with Captain Margesson, forced his way through most difficult jungle on the right, and gradually working towards the enemy's left flank, approached the concealed timbers. The intention was to get round the enemy's left and turn that flank; but the entrenchments ran so far into the forest that when the Sikhs emerged from the dense scrub, instead of finding themselves on a flank, they suddenly came under a point-blank fire from the stockade itself, which not only caused some casualties, but obliged them to regain cover and trend away still further to their right. The fighting had now been going on for

nearly two hours, and it was evident that a frontal attack could not succeed until the flanking movement had been effected. Cobbe continued his advance, having several more men wounded, and at last was able to clear the left wing of the stockade and bring his Sikhs and Central Africans on the rear of the enemy's War Camp.

As soon as the position was realised, discarding further fire tactics, the Sikhs and Central Africans, eager to avenge their losses, charged with the bayonet right into the heart of the camp; Cobbe had meantime sent back word of his intended movements, and as the guns ceased firing the remaining Sikhs and West Africans, starting with a shout, cleared the timbers to their front, and joining their comrades on the right, swept the entire camp. The road in its rear was fairly broad, and down this poured officers and men; many Ashantis were killed and left on the ground, and some of our ·303 carbines were recovered, together with a considerable number of other rifles, guns, and ammunition. The Kintampo stockade, as it was usually called, was a well-designed work about three hundred yards in length; the general alignment was fixed by selecting trees, which formed angles of defence, affording excellent cross fire, and between them timbers of some two or three feet in diameter were placed upright, six feet above and two and a half feet under ground; of these there was a double row, five or six feet apart, and the interior was filled with green trunks, earth, and stones, all well rammed down. At every few feet apart there were loopholes. The tops of the timber uprights were bound together with telegraph wire, and there were wire entanglements and concealed pits in the jungle to the front. The ground was well selected, and the entire work constructed from behind, with a twenty-foot space clear in front, beyond which was dense undergrowth. It is not astonishing that under the circumstances our losses in carrying this formidable stockade were heavy. Major Cobbe was twice wounded, the second bullet necessitating an operation, which placed him *hors de combat* for many weeks; besides Colour-Sergeant Rose, forty-three of the rank and file completed

the casualty list; of these, amongst the small number of Sikhs alone, one man was killed, seven severely and ten slightly wounded. Before sundown the stockade had been dismantled as far as possible, and the Column was back in the Fort. Major Cobbe received a D.S.O.[1]

The 6th of August had been an eventful day; the enemy had made two determined stands, and in both cases their stockades had been carried and destroyed; but they were conscious that this had not been done without severe losses to us. Fifty-five casualties out of six hundred engaged, they calculated, was sufficient encouragement to face us again, and accordingly they reinforced their War Camp on the Kumassi-Kokofu road, in the belief we should select that as our next objective. They had calculated rightly in so far as locality was concerned, but did not take into consideration the possibility of a night attack; and it was this form of surprise that Colonel Burroughs fixed on and carried through the following day.

The Ashantis have a superstitious dread of darkness, and it is but seldom they ever attempt any movements during the hours of night; it was therefore a wise decision to follow up the successes of the previous day by a night surprise. Captain Loch, of the West African Regiment, was detailed to carry out a reconnaissance of the enemy's position, and so well did he perform this dangerous duty that he was able to furnish, not only an accurate sketch, but also authentic information of their strength.

Colonel Burroughs commanded the attacking Column in person, and told off the various units as follows: a company each from the West African Regiment, Niger Battalions, and Central African Regiment in the order named led the way, and behind these in charge of hospitals and as rear-guard followed two other companies. Loch was in command of No. 1 leading, and had with him Lieutenant Greer as his subaltern. Marching silently down into the swampy ground on the Kokofu road, under a moon just sufficient to show the path distinctly, the sinuous Column arrived about

[1] Cobbe has since received the V.C. in Somaliland.

nine o'clock in close proximity to the unsuspecting stockade. Burroughs's orders were for the leading company to charge direct to its front, whilst two others extended outwards and overlapped the flanks of the stockade, thus enveloping the enemy's wings; and this would probably have been achieved without loss to us, so well had all the orders been executed up to this moment; but unfortunately a British officer was again to pay with his life for our success. Owing to the rattle of a few stones the enemy's scouts were suddenly alarmed, and almost at the moment of the charge poured in a volley, and young Greer fell mortally wounded. It was the signal for many an Ashanti to say his last hurried prayer, if he would say another on earth, for I have been assured by eye-witnesses that with an angry bound officers and men tore through the brushwood, leaped on to the timbers, and were into the camp; sword and bayonet alone were the order of the day, or rather of the night, and the former weapon, which in one part of Africa was being discarded as useless, was playing an important part here. It only shows how carefully any decision regarding the equipment of our troops should be considered before final decisions are come to. The same officer who is fighting an enemy at ten thousand yards range to-day may be on his way to-morrow to meet another foe, who knows nothing of range-finders, but is willing to give him a hand-to-hand duel in primeval forests or on boundless prairies.

Before the enemy had time to offer any effective resistance, the rush of cold steel through the main War Camp was paralysing the occupants of the smaller camps in rear; it was evidently the rendezvous of several thousand men, and the camps furthest removed from Kumassi were probably regarded as absolutely safe from surprise. Little time, however, had they left to realise anything, as from one to another on swept the triumphant soldiers, filling the air with their wild yells, whilst a different wail rose from those whose short day of glory was rapidly passing away. And now torches run hither and thither, flames shoot into the air, hundreds of huts are ablaze, whilst the crackling of logs and

timbers and the burst of stray cartridges or kegs of powder left behind in the fight add to the zest of the midnight destruction. By eleven o'clock all ranks were once again back in the Fort, the enemy having made no attempt to molest the returning troops. The following day Burroughs left Kumassi, now reinforced to a strength of ten officers and British non-commissioned officers and three hundred men of various corps. He marched down the main road by Karsi as far as Esumeja, and thence to Bekwai, destroying some stockades, and thus, after having been closed for four months, this route was once more opened out, and shortly after became again the ordinary line of communication with the coast. The night surprise was a complete success, and was carried out with judgment.

A week's rest, sorely needed by all ranks, followed the return of the Kumassi Column; and I can answer for myself that about this time I felt it would be almost impossible to remain much longer in Ashanti. Sore throat, ptomaine poisoning, a sprained knee, and a bad abscess in the ear, all combined, had well-nigh succeeded in bringing my humble career to a close, and our excellent P.M.O., Dr. McDowell, advised me strongly to go home before it was too late; but I could not honourably do this until the chief work in hand was finished, and as I had fortunately never suffered from a day's fever during my three years in West Africa, and was therefore not weakened to any great extent, I determined to hold on till I reached Kumassi, where I felt sure I should recover. It was a hard struggle, but when at the end of August I quitted that pestilential spot Bekwai I began to mend, and within a fortnight had almost entirely recovered, and was fitter than I had been since landing on the Gold Coast. I always maintain that Kumassi itself was an extraordinarily healthy place; when we remember what its surroundings were like, the hundreds of corpses that had been lying for weeks and months round the Fort, the absence of all comforts and necessaries of life, etc., and withal the fact remains that the Europeans kept comparatively good health, and that cholera or other epidemic disease never touched them. Under

similar conditions in India I doubt if white men would have lived to tell the tale.

During August several prisoners were captured and brought in by our troops; against some of these were charges of murder, or mutilation, or both. A Court of Military Commission was appointed, the sentences of which had to be approved by me. As I was anxious to give all prisoners a full opportunity of stating their cases, and also to make allowances for what might be murder by our law, but something far less under local customs, I asked the King of Bekwai to sit on the Court as a supernumerary member; he gladly accepted the offer, and appeared eager to assist in every way. Two days later the Court had to meet to try two prisoners, and as a preliminary I sent for Jones, the King's right-hand man, and gave him a copy of the charges, to be shown to his Chief, so that he might read them over a day before the trial took place and form an idea of the nature of the crimes. Imagine my surprise when, half an hour later, Jones returned, beaming with smiles, and said, "I am glad to inform you that the King has already found both prisoners entirely guilty." Considering he had never seen either of them, nor heard a single word of evidence, I came to the conclusion that future prisoners under trial would stand a rather better chance without the presence of one of their own Chiefs on the tribunal.

During August some telegrams passed with the Colonial Office regarding the conditions and terms to be offered to such of the enemy as might surrender. The decision was practically left in my hands for the time being, with the proviso that I was to keep the Government regularly informed of all details. Throughout the campaign, in fact, I always felt that I should be backed up in everything which was reasonable, and on no occasion did I ever receive an order which I did not feel at liberty to interpret, if necessary, as it read to me on the spot, and not only to those who had sent it, and who might be unaware of local changes which had since taken place in the circumstances.

The destruction of the stockades round Kumassi and the

march down the main road to Esumeja had finally removed all cause of anxiety as to the position in the Fort, and as the remnants of the scattered Adansi army had betaken themselves towards Lake Busamakwe, I decided to send out two more punitive Columns to search all the country in the vicinity of the lake, and destroy food stuffs, which were reported to have been collected there. These Columns were commanded by Lieutenant-Colonels Henstock, West India Regiment, Assistant Adjutant-General, and Wilkinson, Northumberland Fusiliers; they left Bekwai on the 14th and 15th August, and moving by different routes, and through country entirely unknown to our officers and men, after some days of very difficult marching, joined hands near the lake. No resistance was offered, and the work of destruction was allowed to proceed. The two Columns then separated and traversed the entire shores, destroying much property; but the richness of the land and the extent of the farms was found to be so great as to render hopeless the task of permanently damaging the inhabitants by such methods.

The country round this lake is well worth seeing, and quite unlike what one generally meets in West Africa. The waters abound in fish, and, if rumour speaks true, the traces of gold along its shore augur well for future mining operations; but of this personally I know nothing.

Henstock's and Wilkinson's Columns, on the completion of their task, had orders to return to Bekwai *viâ* Kokofu, in case that town might have again been occupied. Meantime I received seemingly authentic news that the Kokofus had assembled at a place called Ejimum, to the north of Esumeja; in order, therefore, to ensure the flank of the returning Columns, I sent Lieutenant-Colonel Brake, D.S.O., R.A., who had just arrived in the country with the 2nd Battalion Central African Regiment from Somaliland, with orders to join hands with Henstock, and then act as circumstances dictated. Brake found the old stockades in front of Kokofu had been rebuilt and much strengthened, but no one was in occupation; evidently the approach of two Forces from opposite directions was not to the liking of the enemy,

if there was one in the vicinity. Having pulled down the main timbers, Brake moved on to Kokofu, where he awaited the arrival of the Lake Columns.

After an interview between the Commanders, it was decided that Henstock and Wilkinson should attack the enemy at Ejimum, whilst Brake, from certain information which had been received, would take a slightly easterly direction and move towards the Ashanti town of Djachi. The story about Ejimum turned out to be a myth, and the disappointed troops returned to Bekwai in two bodies on the 24th and 25th August.

Colonel Brake, however, met with unexpected good fortune; the information regarding the presence of a body of the enemy on the Kokofu-Ojesu road turned out correct, and whilst on the march the advanced guard came on a village—Odum by name—which was surprised. The Ashantis had no idea that anyone in our camp knew of this road, nor did they believe it possible that we should decide to march so suddenly along the route leading to Ojesu, the headquarters of Queen Ashantua, one of the most powerful of their rulers, and whose town was the headquarters of Fetish worship in that part of the country.

Taking advantage of this surprise, Brake pushed on as quickly as possible, and was just in time to prevent the occupation of a prepared stockade covering the village of Djachi; his men, well led by Captain Johnston-Stewart, 93rd Highlanders, were too eager to be denied, and rushing the obstruction, inflicted some loss on the flying enemy by rifle fire. The village itself was soon after entered, and found to contain a considerable quantity of loot. Opoku, an Adansi Chief, and one of the best leaders the enemy possessed, was killed during the fighting, and some other prominent men also met their death this day.

The return of the loot-laden Column to Bekwai was a most interesting event. Chief amongst the spectators was the old King, by this time quite rejuvenated; he stood in the market square watching one carrier after another deposit his

pile, and loudly proclaimed the gallantry of the white man and his black soldiers. "Yes," he said to me, "the Great White Queen is truly powerful; the dogs of Ashantis have now learnt how the white man and the Bekwai (!)" (he had sent five scouts with Brake) "deal with them." I did not correct the old Chief; I liked him too well to hurt his feelings, and after all, he knew as well as I did that his people had had nothing whatever to do with the affair. The captured articles were of every conceivable description; foremost were several gold ornaments, some small bags of gold dust, about £100 in cash, flags, chairs, state umbrellas, clothing, books, and several English-made trunks and many other useful things. Most of these, together with some sheep and live stock, were distributed amongst the troops who had helped to capture them. Some component parts of a ·303 Maxim and a quantity of the same description of ammunition were also recovered. The Bekwai Chief asked for, and was given, a few small souvenirs of the fight, which no doubt he often points to as taken by his own valiant soldiery. The Denkera Chief also received a small memento as compensation for three of his Levies who had a few days previously been captured and killed by Ashantis on the Pekki border. The capture of these men nearly ended in the flight of the whole Denkera army from Pekki, as being on the Kumassi border they feared a raid by the enemy; at the same time the Pekki people themselves were getting very tired of the presence of so large a crowd in their village, and squabbles between our two allies were of frequent occurrence.

And whilst the enemy was receiving some hard knocks and being gradually driven to the north, Major Cramer had with his Insuaim Levies followed on the heels of Henstock's Column towards Lake Busamakwe; and having recently been stiffened by the presence of a company of Infantry which I had sent from Bekwai, these locusts of West Africa were devouring the farm produce and making themselves as unpleasant as possible. Later on, when the country south of Kumassi was quite clear of the enemy, these same Levies moved in that direction and scoured the entire land. The

Ashantis have a habit of burying their treasure and ornaments, and I cannot but think that the many thousand Levies which eventually joined us must have searched out some of these hidden treasures.

In the far south at Cape Coast another fifteen hundred carriers had arrived from East Africa and marched north, under Captain Moorhouse, R.A., who had accompanied them from their homes. The Central African corps had received the full strength to which they were to be brought; the West African Regiment had been increased to six companies, and all the Field-guns asked for were in the country. The various Departments of the Force had been considerably augmented, and Major Willans was able to provide full rations to all ranks. Thus it will be seen that matters were gradually progressing favourably, but our old enemies the weather and sickness were as bad as ever. I do not know any country where for day after day and month after month the rain can continue so regularly; and this means that after a time you are practically living in a marsh, which becomes a fetid swamp when sufficient time has been allowed for it to get churned into this state by thousands of human feet. This was practically our condition in Ashanti from May, when I landed on the coast, till well into November. Of course sickness is the sure accompaniment of such surroundings, and of this our officers and men were having their full share; and it speaks for the hard work done by the Medical officers when I state that the largest proportion of deaths amongst Europeans from disease pure and simple was amongst them. Before the close of operations we had lost Dr. Langstaff, Colonial surgeon in the Gold Coast service, and Drs. Jeafferson and Castor, both Special Service officers. Amongst others Major Cramer, who had done so well with his Levies, died before he could reach the coast on his downward journey.

There was, moreover, one thing which such of the public as were interested in our doings never recognised, and which was, I think, not even officially understood, and that is that although with the relief of Kumassi the danger of

disaster and disgrace to our arms had entirely disappeared, yet the greater part of the fights of the campaign took place after the relief had been accomplished, and continued in almost unbroken succession for two and a half months.

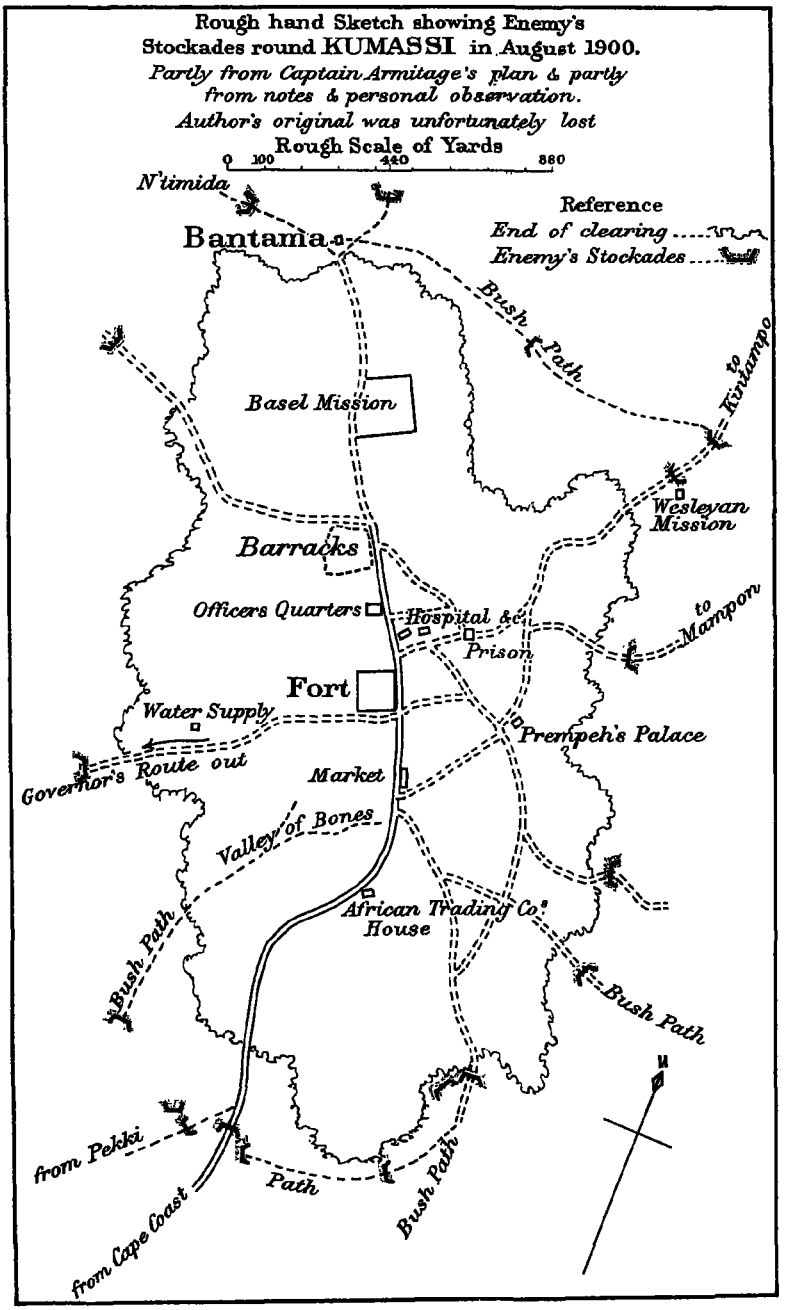
It is of some of these, prior to the close of the final operations, that I shall write in the next chapter.



MY FAITHFUL HAUSA ORDERLY, AHMEDU KANO

DRAWING BY LADY HELEN GRAHAM

To face page 374


Rough hand Sketch showing Enemy's
Stockades round KUMASSI in August 1900.
Partly from Captain Armitage's plan & partly
from notes & personal observation.
Author's original was unfortunately lost
Rough Scale of Yards
0 100 440 880
N'timida
Bantama
Reference
End of clearing
Enemy's Stockades
Bush Path
to Kwampo
Basel Mission
Wesleyan Mission
Barracks
Officers Quarters
Hospital &c.
Prison
to Mampon
Fort
Water Supply
Prempeh's Palace
Governor's Route out
Market
Valley of Bones
African Trading Co's House
Bush Path
Bush Path
from Pekki
Path
Bush Path
from Cape Coast
N

CHAPTER XXI

1900

FINAL OCCUPATION OF KUMASSI—MARCH TO KINTAMPO—PROGRESS OF PACIFICATION

I WAS determined that by the beginning of September the whole Force, with the exception of the troops on the Lines of communications, should be concentrated in Kumassi, and from that point as a base, work northwards, systematically clearing the country of the enemy, as had already been done to the south. There remained only two doubtful places in which it was reported they might offer battle, and it was to ascertain the truth of such reports, and attack the enemy if found, that two strong Columns left Bekwai on the 29th and 30th August. The first, commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel Brake, R.A., consisted of seven hundred and fifty Infantry, two 12½-pounders, and one 7-pounder gun. He was to march *viâ* Esumeja towards Ojesu, which is fifteen miles east of Kumassi, a very important Fetish town and the head-quarters of Queen Ashantua, reported one of the most capable of Ashanti rulers, with a reputation for commanding in the Field. She was one of our bitterest foes, and it was tolerably certain that she meant to have at least one fight with our troops. After destroying Ojesu, Brake was to move direct to Kumassi, from which place a Column would be sent to meet him.

The second Column, of which I took command myself, comprised one thousand Infantry and four guns. With this Force I intended to move through Pekki, thence detach a flying Column to search the country between the Pekki and N'Kwanta roads, whilst the main body advanced on the Fort.

My own share of the proceedings turned out most uninteresting; a body of the enemy north of Pekki fled before a detached party of three hundred and fifty men under Major Montanaro, R.A., and on the 30th August we reached Kumassi with an enormous train of carriers laden with provisions, hospital stores, and, at last, even some clothing for the troops. One thousand men with four thousand five hundred carriers forms a Column of route that gives a very practical idea of what marching in tropical forests means, and to this extent, at any rate, everyone gained some experience.

These moves from Bekwai constituted the final exodus from this hospitable but pestiferous spot, and thereafter only a few soldiers were left there as a compliment to the King. Bekwai then became an outpost of Esumeja, and the direct main road alone was used for communications. The eve of my departure was marked by the arrival of three Ashanti envoys with a flag of truce. Their bodies were painted white so as to make sure they would not be fired on by our sentries. They presented a very comical sight, and I think were rather pleased to find they were not going to be hanged on the spot, although I was informed by the missionary Jones that, even in that country, such messengers are considered sacred and not molested.

Colonel Brake divided his Column into two portions, and moving *viâ* Djachi, the scene of his exploit of 24th August, reached the village of Asuasi on the 30th. He had been warned to open communication, if possible, with Captain Benson, in command of the Levies of Eastern Akim, who, as explained before, had been slowly moving up since July in a north-westerly direction, and was then known to be approaching Ojesu from the direction of Bompata and Odumasi. As I shall describe presently, however, these Levies had two days previously come into contact with a detached force of only three hundred Ashantis and been totally defeated, losing all their baggage and belongings, and deserting their unfortunate British officers. Brake, of course, knew nothing of all this until after he had captured Ojesu, and had therefore been unable to afford any assist-

ance. At seven a.m. on the 31st August his Column advanced on Ojesu, which was reported to be about two hours' march ahead. The Sierra Leone Frontier men furnished the advanced scouts, with a company of the 2nd Central Africans in close support. These were followed by the Commander and his Staff with the 12½-pounder guns, and the remainder of the troops, consisting of Central Africans, Niger Hausas, and Yorubas, followed in alternate companies. At 8.30 a.m. the enemy commenced firing occasional shots, which continued until 9.40, when the scouts reported a stockade across the road, and at the same time the enemy opened a heavy fire on our front and flanks. Captain Johnston-Stewart at once extended his company of Central Africans, and himself taking command of the right, directed Lieutenant Burton,[1] Munster Fusiliers, to advance along the left of the track, another company prolonging still further to the left, both being under the direction of Captain Gordon, Gordon Highlanders.

Whilst these movements were being carried out, the 12½-pounder guns, commanded by Lieutenant Halfpenny, R.A., were quickly run into action, and opened with double common (18-lb.) shell. The practice was good, and the heavy timbers were soon flying in all directions, spreading terror in the ranks of the Ashantis, who, notwithstanding, kept up their fire, running from point to point in hopes of avoiding the splinters. Captains Greer, Royal Warwickshire Regiment, and Lewis, 21st Lancers, with two companies of the Niger Frontier Force, were working round the enemy's left flank, where very thick bush much delayed progress; but this movement, as usual, was the most dreaded by them, and kept a large number employed. At Ojesu the Ashantis showed a really brave front, and proved what excellent material for soldiers exists in their country. For two hours they stood up against a well-directed rifle fire, supplemented

[1] Burton had only joined the force at Bekwai three days previously, with a letter from an old friend to me hoping the boy would have a look in at some fight. He was attached for duty to the Transport corps, but I allowed him to accompany the Central Africans for this march to fill a vacancy. It cost him his life.

by quick-firing Field-guns, which, as was seen after the fight, were killing and maiming large numbers of them; yet only when both their flanks were turned and the bayonet called into play did they retire.

During the advance of the flank companies our casualties were increasing in the centre of the attack, where the Central Africans were exposed to a heavy fire from some Lee-Metfords, Martinis, and Sniders, besides Dane guns. Lieutenant Burton was killed whilst leading his half-company, and Sergeant-Major Slattery, Scottish Rifles, was wounded, several men being also put out of action. Whilst superintending the operations Colonel Brake was himself wounded in the chest, fortunately not severely; but the general advance continued steadily, the men working well through the thick bush and over rifle-pits, entanglements, and logs of wood, all skilfully placed to bar their way. At last the Central Africans had got round the enemy's right, at the same time as Johnston-Stewart fortunately came out at a clearance, from which he was able to rake their line of retirement, and the united companies made a rush for Ojesu. On our right Greer and Lewis had managed to work through the heavy jungle, but were hardly in time to join in the pursuit, whilst the reserve company of the Niger Battalion coming up the main road entered the town on the heels of the others. Our casualties, besides the three Europeans named above, amounted to thirty, many of whom were dangerously or severely wounded.

In Ojesu were found some property and papers belonging to Captain Benson, which was a proof that disaster had befallen the Akim Levies; but no certain news was obtainable, as all the inhabitants had fled. The scene of Brake's fight was strewn with dead; nine bodies lay in one cluster, killed by a millimètre shell, and of wounded no count could ever be taken in Ashanti, as the enemy were adepts at carrying them off. Only once did I personally find wounded men, and these had been entirely disabled by Lee-Metford bullets, and I suppose were too bad to be transported quickly. At seven p.m. I was standing at the upper windows of the Fort in

Kumassi, watching with glasses in the direction of Ojesu, when I saw three star-shells ascend, the prearranged signal that 'Ashantua had been defeated and her town occupied. I slept peacefully that night.

Mr. Russell, my Private Secretary, whom I had sent with this Column, owing to his knowledge of the people, rendered very useful service, not only in a political sense, but by more than once accompanying the scouts and joining in the fighting. Colonel Brake also specially mentioned Captain Gordon for his cool gallantry, and Captains Bryan, Manchester, and Reeve, Leinster Regiment, his Staff officers. Amongst the commanding officers Captain McKinnon, Derbyshire Regiment, Greer, Warwickshire, and Lieutenant Halfpenny, R.A., were highly commended. Sergeant-Major Slattery, Scottish Rifles, and Sergeant Adada, of the Central African Regiment, received the Distinguished Conduct Medal for this affair.

The Ojesu Column reached Kumassi next day, the 1st September, and thus the whole available strength of the Field force was concentrated in the heart of Ashanti-land.

Besides Opoku, who had met his death at the surprise of Djachi, several other prominent Ashanti Chiefs had been killed in recent actions ; amongst them being Yow Apensi, the late King Prempeh's linguist, and Kwasi Dumfe, head of the Fetish priests; and now a few equally important people began to come in and surrender. But until we could get hold of the real leaders of the rebellion there was no hope of ending operations. Inkanza of Adansi, Ashantua of Ojesu, Kobina Cherri of Odumasi, Chief Kofi Kofia, and others were wanted, and the time was slowly, but surely, coming when they would enter either the new prison enclosure outside the main gate of the Fort, or the prisoners' vault within its walls ; some only to leave them for distant lands oversea, and others, against whose names murder was writ, for the scaffold lately erected under their own sacrificial trees.

It was not until some days after Brake's arrival at Kumassi that I was able to get any information concerning the defeat of the Akim Levies under Captain Benson; in consequence I was

unable to send out search Columns. The local Levies had brought in all kinds of different stories, and the whole country was so absolutely unknown to us, that no object could have been served in moving about it without something to guide us. As soon as I received the news a strong Column started in the direction of Bohenkra, and of its movements I will write later on.

The story of the disaster must needs be told. As stated before, Captain Benson, Shropshire Light Infantry, had been deputed in June by the Gold Coast Government to raise Levies from amongst the eastern Akims, and with these to make demonstrations on the east of Kumassi. The object of these Levies was not to act as fighting men, but rather to keep the Akims themselves and their neighbours quiet by furnishing them with employment during the troublous times in Ashanti. Captain Wilcox, Adjutant of the Gold Coast Volunteers, had been appointed second in command to Benson, and between them, after endless troubles with Native Chiefs and their numerous War Captains, an ill-disciplined crowd numbering some three thousand five hundred men had been collected by the middle of August, and were concentrated at Obagu, some seven miles south of Bompata, in Akim territory, and in a slightly north-easterly direction from Lake Busamakwe. I had received no news from Benson as to his movements, although I had sent special messengers by way of the lake, and further, I felt sure he could not fail to hear of the presence of two large Columns which were in that vicinity, as also of Cramer's Levies. I now know that he had twice sent messages to me, but in those days it was practically impossible to trust to natives of any class or clan; I also found that he had written to Cramer, and hence was aware of his presence on the lake; why, therefore, he still moved on in the direction of Kumassi I am unable to understand.

On the 22nd of August, Wilcox joined Benson, who had meantime proceeded to Odumasi, which is twenty-five miles east of Kumassi, on the Kumassi-Kibbi road. Here also was King Amoaku Atta, who chose to accompany his people,

no doubt in the belief that he would meet with no foes, but, like the other loyal Chiefs, get a share of the plunder. Benson, for some reason known to himself, was anxious to push on at once in the direction of Ojesu, and urged this on the King; but this Chief positively refused to proceed. I cannot help thinking that, owing to long-continued illness, poor Benson felt that delay on the part of the Levies might perhaps be put down to him, and being a naturally brave man, he resented this, and determined to try conclusions with their assistance alone. I can imagine no other explanation, for not only was he not expected to advance unassisted, but I had sent him distinct orders not to do so, which orders, unfortunately, he had not received when the disaster took place.

On the 24th of August there was a serious quarrel between different factions of the Levies, and Benson was obliged to disarm and dismiss a portion of them. He then decided to march to Bohenkra, on the road leading to Ojesu, and fixed this movement for the 28th of August. He was thus marching in the direction of a hornet's nest, for at this very time I was preparing a large Column to attack Ojesu, which is only a few miles from Bohenkra itself.

On the 26th he wrote me a letter, informing me of his past movements, and stating he was marching in the direction of Kumassi. I received this at Bekwai on the 28th, the very day of the disaster (of which, of course, I was unaware), and at once sent two messengers with promise of high rewards, with fresh orders. In these I described the exact state of affairs, thanked him for his past work, and warned him of Brake's advance, with orders to wait till Ojesu had been captured, and then to join our Column. My letter was too late to prevent the disaster, but Benson received it all right, for it was found amongst his papers after his death and brought to me in Kumassi.

On the 27th the Levies advanced and halted within an hour's march of Bohenkra. Next morning Benson started at about seven with his body-guard, which consisted of a few ill-trained men, and was attacked a mile from camp, losing

three killed and two wounded; he then moved east to rejoin Wilcox. After this the story is not easy to follow; Benson did not live to write his report, and Wilcox's account is decidedly vague. What I gather was that the Ashantis, knowing that only Levies were advancing against them, sent three hundred good men to oppose the Akims. For a couple of hours the enemy's fire, which was desultory, was returned, whilst the Akims kept in close order; and then, as the firing grew heavier, one after another sought safety in flight. The cowardly King was about the first to go, and was closely followed by his chief War Captain—worthy leaders of men! —and by two p.m. nearly every armed man had fled. Three chiefs alone remained and stood by Benson, and their names deserve to be recorded; they were the chiefs of Wanki, Asiakwa, and Bompata. Messrs. Hammond and Hutchinson, clerks in the Gold Coast Civil Service, also did good work, and behaved well, both before and during the fighting; and some of the non-commissioned officers of the Gold Coast Volunteers stood by the officers to the end. There was nothing to be done now but for the British officers to retreat with their still remaining body-guard, and this was done; Odumasi being reached by midnight.

This is all the information that could be gathered in writing, but eye-witnesses told me that during the fighting immediately east of Bohenkra, the Ashantis rushed in to close quarters and shot down the Akims, who begged for mercy. The carriers threw away their loads, and in consequence all the government specie (a considerable sum), stores, ammunition, etc., were lost; and when visited by our Columns shortly afterwards, large numbers of headless corpses marked the scene of the disaster. Benson, who had been suffering from fever, etc., for a long time past, was overcome by this sudden reverse, and decided to remain at Odumasi, whilst he sent Wilcox and a Mr. Ladrack, of the Basel Mission Society (who had come in charge of carriers), back to Abetifi to fetch up stores and medicines. Wilcox might have refused to go and leave his chief at such a time, but unfortunately he did not do so; and after his

departure Benson, worn out with worry and illness, ended his life.

This regrettable incident, I think, goes to prove more than anything else the superiority of the Kumassis and their immediate neighbours as fighting men over the other natives of the Gold Coast and its hinterlands; for whereas over and over again did these gallant Ashantis face us in the Field and fight like good men and true, yet in nearly every case except that of some of the Bekwais and Dengiassis, who, however, were themselves Ashantis, did the Levies who came to our assistance take to their heels the moment that danger threatened. It would, indeed, be good policy to treat the Ashantis so as to gain their loyalty, and having done that, to enlist them if possible in our Forces, when I do not believe they would be surpassed as soldiers by any West African natives. They are not a prepossessing-looking race, but I believe they are made of the right stuff for soldiers, at any rate they are well worth a trial; and a regiment of these people, well commanded and ruled by the laws of common sense as distinct from red-book discipline alone, which is not suited to them, might one day prove of even greater value in other parts of West Africa than did the corps which crossed the waters to crush the rebellion.

From grave to amusing is only a short step, and it is certainly very amusing to read in Captain Wilcox's report of the disaster at Bohenkra that all the Akim Chiefs were armed with cowhide whips alone, which were meant to flog their men into action. Even this weapon of offence, however, most of them seemed incapable of utilising, as only two of them received a mention in despatches, and these in the following terms: "I have great pleasure in bringing to notice these two Chiefs, who over and over again rushed to the rear and flogged their men to the front, and did everything in their power to stop the panic." It is well to explain that, however it may be read, these excellent leaders stood to the last by our officers, and proved that with some races of mankind the lash is a more powerful and useful means of appealing to the feelings, under certain conditions, than all

the sentimental eloquence of European platform orators. Maybe it was one of our educated West Africans who, basing his information on wild stories from Bohenkra, sent the reports, which were freely reproduced in continental papers, of British soldiers being sjamboked ashore at Durban. I have not since 1900 followed the fortunes of King Amoaku Atta of Akim, but I sincerely trust that conduct so disgraceful and cowardice so pronounced have had their proper reward, and if he has been sent to act as doorkeeper to Prempeh in the Seychelles he has been let off cheaply. I should have been sorry for his dusky majesty if he had fallen into my clutches. The conduct of the Juabin Akims also deserves severe censure, for although they were within hail of the fight at Bohenkra, and were supposed to form part of the Akim Levies, they never stirred a hand to assist; but I suppose after all one cannot expect too much from such people.

The 7th of September was marked by the completion of the telegraph line from Cape Coast to Kumassi; and from this date on not only were we able to communicate by wire direct with England and all our West Coast Colonies, but we daily received Reuter's messages, which brought us into contact with civilisation, and made life more pleasant all round.

Within a few hours of the arrival of the true story of the disaster of Bohenkra a Column of three hundred and sixty Infantry and a 12½-pounder gun, under command of Major Reeve, Leinster Regiment, left Kumassi with the object of traversing the country in the direction of Odumasi, and punishing the villages which had shared in the attack. This duty was thoroughly performed and much government property recovered. Reeve then turned to the north, and, passing through the country of the Juabins and Agogo, returned to Kumassi on the 16th September by the Mampon road. He was everywhere well received, or, I should say, received with respect, which was a sure sign that all these people now began to realise that our star was again in the ascendant; for I firmly believe that both Juabin and Mampon

bore us no good will, and would certainly have joined the rebels had not circumstances been against them when Kumassi was first besieged. This march of Reeve's opened up the last untrodden country from the coast to Kumassi, leaving only that to the north and north-west to be traversed by our troops, and this was now taken in hand.

On the 12th September a Column of four hundred men and one Field-gun reconnoitred as far as Ofinsu, north of Kumassi; it was followed by several thousand native Levies, who brought in quantities of food and stock. On this same day two important Chiefs came in and surrendered unconditionally, and two days later the 7-pounder gun lost by Aplin's Column near Kumassi in April was brought in and given up. Following this reconnaissance several small Columns traversed the country to the west, south-west, and south of Kumassi, in each case making military surveys and destroying such towns and villages as had harboured rebels, or been implicated in the murder of British subjects. Our casualties during these expeditions were very small, whilst the lesson taught the Ashantis was sharp.

In Kumassi itself great changes were taking place; a regular market had been re-established, and the troops were able to purchase meat, fowls, and vegetables in any quantities. The prices were fixed by Captain Carleton, the Provost-Marshal (who, with his assistant, Captain Cartwright, was doing excellent work), and were suited to the means of the soldiers and carriers, and not to the greed of the vendors. It was, indeed, time that the people were taught that we had not come to Kumassi, on this occasion at least, in order to fill their pockets. They were also given to understand that if they did not bring in produce to the market it would be brought in by our men without payment. The system answered admirably.

Another matter which needed immediate looking into was sanitation, and this was taken in hand by Major Holford, D.A.A.G. There was nothing too small for him to see to personally, and by his untiring energy and personal example the surroundings of the Fort, so long the receptacle

for every kind of awful deposit, were eventually cleansed, and at the close of operations Kumassi could well have borne comparison with any West African town.

The medical arrangements were in the hands of Dr. McDowell, P.M.O., than whom no man could have been better fitted to deal with them; and he was most ably seconded by his lieutenants, prominent amongst whom were Doctors Tichborne, Thomson, Grant, Fletcher, Darker, Buee, Hay, and Gray. There were many others whose names were not as familiar to me personally, but this Department was throughout ably administered; and now in Kumassi it was astonishing to observe the regularity and harmony with which everything worked, and the zeal displayed by Medical officers, only one of whom held the Queen's commission. But perhaps the most striking point was the fact that they all fell into the routine of military discipline almost imperceptibly, and but few were ever hampered by its supposed irksomeness. Later on, when small-pox spread with alarming strides, new Field hospitals sprang up with equal rapidity, and every precaution that was possible was taken. The buildings may have been rough and the available comforts few, when compared with the more elaborate arrangements made in larger campaigns, but in no campaign could there have been officers keener to do their duty by the sick and wounded than we had in Ashanti. A few kind friends in England sent us out gifts of money and clothing, and prominent amongst them were Messrs. Harmsworth, of London, who generously gave £150, which went a long way to gladden the hearts of men who represented the inhabitants of three continents.

The Supply and Transport Department of the Force had gradually emerged from its original chaos, and by the middle of September convoys were running on the *etappen* or stage system, carriers being permanently located at stations and working under escort half-way to the next stage daily, where they were relieved by others from the station beyond. This enabled the men to have at least a corner to which they could return every day, and where they might

cook and eat their food in comfort. Major Willans, the Chief of the Department, was to be found everywhere and at all times, and it needed a man of this stamp at the head of affairs to ensure things working smoothly, for under his orders were men speaking no less than twelve different tongues, to say nothing of dialects, whilst interpreters were always dogging the steps of the different Transport officers in order to bring this or that complaint or petition to notice; and I often marvelled at the patience of these white men, and recalled somewhat similar scenes of my own early soldiering days, when I perhaps did not always display the best of tempers. Willans was fortunate in having under him a loyal body of officers, and amongst these the names of Captain Moorhouse, R.A., Faunce, West India Regiment, Blair and Byrne, of the Lagos Hausas, and Mr. Tate, from East Africa, were in those days very familiar to us in Ashanti. Before the force had been long concentrated in Kumassi, good Transport lines came into existence, sanitation was well regulated, and large convoys of provisions, clothing, and stores arrived daily with the regularity of clockwork.

How different was the scene on the Maidan, in front of the Fort, to what it had been for many months past. Starvation had been replaced by plenty, and in a single convoy might be seen masses of the tinned provisions of Chicago, the wines of France, lentils and curry stuffs specially shipped for the Sikhs from India, potatoes for hospital patients grown in and imported from the Canary Islands, poultry from German Togoland, and a hundred other ordinary stores from all over the world. Over thirty officers and a few warrant and non-commissioned officers were posted to this Department during the time we were on service, and from a return of October I find that actually at work between the River Prah and Kumassi, a total of seventy-four miles, there were at that time nine thousand five hundred regularly enlisted carriers receiving food, clothing, and fixed rates of pay, and over five thousand south of the Prah, who worked at their own risk and were paid by the journey.

Here is an amusing story of red tape and ignorance combined. It is hardly necessary to say that, with so much practical work on hand, there was little time to devote to formal returns and accounts, but this important item had not been altogether forgotten. Early in June telegraphic indents for a supply of stationery had been sent to England, in which it was specially pointed out that War Office Army Service Corps forms, etc., similar to those used in Ashanti in 1895, should be shipped. Nothing was heard for many weeks, until the result of repeated inquiries elicited the fact that they had been addressed to Sierra Leone and were lying there; and there they would probably be still, if they had not been again specially applied for. But this was merely a detail, for when eventually the consignment arrived in the middle of September, it was found to consist of books for "hired vehicles" and "boat transport," neither of which existed in the Colony. The clerk who packed the cases probably believed Ashanti was somewhere in Asia Minor or on the Nile, and after all it made little difference to him.

The Telegraph and Public Works Departments had settled down by the end of September to a regular routine of work. The wire had been relaid to Kumassi, and a branch line ran to Bekwai; arrangements were made later to renew it to Kintampo, one hundred miles north of Kumassi, and thus again connect the Northern Territories of the Colony with Cape Coast. Mr. Andrews, of the Gold Coast Service, was the chief director, and although at first the delays seemed hopeless and the line was eternally being destroyed or blown down, by the end of September it was in first-class order. With the telegraph the roads also were taken in hand, and rest-houses for one thousand men erected at every station on the line of communications. It was a pleasant sight, when I visited the main road once again, to find clean camps well laid out and a proper water supply arranged for. Some of these posts were models of smartness, more especially Kwissa and Fumsu. At the latter station Major Weston, 5th Liverpool Regiment, was for a long time in command, and the tidy barracks and roads, with a really strong bridge crossing

the Fum, were evidence of how he had laboured in that uninviting spot.

After Colonel Morland was invalided home, the command of the Line of communications was entrusted to Major Peyton, C.M.G., Indian Staff Corps. Poor fellow, he was lately killed on the Scinde Frontiers by a fall from his horse. At the Base Colonel Man Stuart, C.M.G., with a Staff for all duties of fourteen officers and civilians, kept everything going until he was himself invalided home early in November, and I was then obliged to send Lieutenant-Colonel Henstock, Assistant Adjutant-General, down to relieve him, as he too was quite prostrated with sickness, and could no longer remain in the hinterlands. Towards the end of the campaign so many of my old friends and Staff had left for England, that in an official despatch I wound up my letter reporting deaths and invalidings with the remark, "I, even I, only am left." The phrase, to which I could see no objection, was expunged at the request of one of my Staff, but its truth seemed to strike him all the same.

On the 15th September, as many Ashantis as could be collected were assembled to witness the destruction of a specially constructed timber stockade by three 12½-pounder quick-firing guns, using double common shell. The effect was certainly astonishing, and they went away wiser men. Whether it was news of this or not which decided them I cannot say; at any rate, at both the fights which shortly afterwards took place the enemy used no stockades, but carefully selected their ground and cleared it to their front. What they expected I cannot say, but on the 30th September, taking advantage of their mistake, we only employed rifle and Maxim fire, with results most disastrous to them.

Next day a ceremonial parade was held of all the troops then present in Kumassi, consisting of seventeen hundred and fifty Infantry and nine guns. It was well carried out, and much impressed the Ashantis present as well as the loyal Chiefs, who, now seeing daylight ahead and feeling safe from further mishaps, were pouring Levies into Kumassi,

until these eventually numbered over ten thousand men. I gave each Chief an opportunity of following one or other of our punitive Columns which constantly went out from the Fort for three or four days at a time, and having thus satisfied their pride and probably helped them to gather some souvenir of their visit, they were generally started off *en route* to their own country, after considerable persuasion, sometimes combined with a little force.

As the weather would show no signs of a break, and it was necessary to keep the remaining enemy on the move and give them no time to tamper with such tribes as were beginning to show signs of submission, I decided to send out two Columns in a northerly direction. No. 1 was commanded by Major Holford, 7th Hussars, and consisted of one 12½-pounder gun and five hundred Infantry; its destination was Kintampo, one hundred miles to the north of Kumassi, and it left the Fort on the 20th September. Only a few stray shots were fired, and on the third day out Holford was met by Inkanza, King of Adansi, who surrendered unconditionally; with him came his son, his head War Captain, and eleven other Chiefs, all of whom had been in rebellion. These were sent back to Kumassi under escort. Continuing the march, the Column passed through N'Koranza, where it was met by the Chief of that place, who was so overcome by the prospect, that he had placed himself in a state of alcoholic stupor.

By the 1st October Holford was at Kintampo, a very good march considering the necessary halts of three days; here he left one hundred men under Captain Brock, of the Central African Regiment, and was back in Kumassi by the 13th October, a total distance of over two hundred miles. The weather during these twenty-three days was as bad as it could be, and the tattered appearance of the Column bore testimony to its trials, whilst the line of stretchers in rear was evidence of the work that fell to Dr. Buee, of whom all spoke most highly. One hundred guns were captured, and the important village of Sekodumasi, together with nineteen others that had harboured the mur-



CAPTAIN J. H. HOLFORD, D.S.O.
SEVENTH HUSSARS

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derers of several of our Hausas and telegraph linesmen, were destroyed.

The same day as Holford had left for Kintampo, Captain (now Sir Donald) Stewart, son of the late Field-Marshal Sir Donald Stewart, arrived in the Fort on return from long leave to England. He had been away when the trouble began, but now that matters were being settled he was back to resume his position as Resident at Kumassi. I had heard from the Colonial Office some time past regarding his return, and, in accordance with instructions, I was able to hand over to him the Civil management of affairs in such districts as were free of rebels. In consequence he was soon in communication with most of the rebel Chiefs to the south of a line drawn east and west through Kumassi, and in addition, to the north-east and north as far as the Kumassi-Ofinsu road. To the west and north-west of Kumassi other military operations were in hand, and these parts, therefore, still remained under martial law. The instructions from the Colonial Office were concise, and in accordance with what I had expected. The military situation was left entirely in my hands until such time as both Stewart and I considered it expedient to open communications with all or any of the rebel Chiefs; and I was enjoined to assist in bringing the state of affairs to this pass as soon as it could reasonably be done. Once hostilities ceased entirely I was not to resume them without his concurrence, and finally it was urged that complete co-operation between us was of great importance. As regards this last injunction, I can only say that Donald Stewart and I worked throughout the remainder of the three months I was on the coast in absolute harmony.

Following Holford by one day, No. 2 Column, also destined for the north, under command of Major (local Lieutenant-Colonel) Montanaro, R.A., left Kumassi by the Ofinsu road. With him were two 12½-pounder guns and nine hundred and fifty Infantry, followed some miles in the rear by nearly eight hundred Levies, from Major Cramer's and other musters. Some of the most important Chiefs amongst the enemy had a few days previously sent in to ask for terms; the reply

was simply "Unconditional surrender," and I had hoped that this, followed by an immediate advance, would have the desired effect. It was not altogether unsuccessful, as was proved by the surrender of the Adansi King and thirteen other Chiefs to Holford, who, as will be seen from the map, was for the first two or three marches moving almost parallel to Montanaro, and was then within a few miles of him.

The object of this second Column was to proceed as far as, or beyond, Ofinsu, and there attack Chief Kofi Kofia, who was reported to have assembled several thousand men. Montanaro's force moved in two lots; the leading portion with the guns and six hundred and fifty men was to do the fighting, whilst three hundred men guarded the baggage and carriers. The second portion was, if necessary, to act independently, but was to keep closed up if possible, forming bivouac each night with the others.

About ten miles out from Kumassi it became evident from the hum of men's voices and the beating of war drums, etc., that a village to our front was occupied; but though this turned out correct, the enemy did not offer any resistance, but quitted as Captains Margesson and Luard with two companies of Central Africans advanced with the bayonet. A halt was called for the night, and the enemy made a show of attacking the camp, but besides killing one man nothing further took place.

Next morning Montanaro moved on, and after passing through two deserted farms came on the Ashantis near the village of Dinassi. Major Melliss, in command of the advanced guard, opened fire with a ·303 Maxim gun at two hundred yards range, and Captain Grahame, with a company of Niger Hausas, entered the bush to his right, and began a turning movement in that direction. The 12½-pounder guns commanded by Captain Crean, Canadian Artillery, took up a position on the main road and swept that and the bush to their front with case shot and shrapnel. Major Cobbe, with his Sikhs and a company each from the Northern and Southern Niger Corps, in accordance with orders, moved against the enemy's right in echelon of

companies, flank protected. The hostile fire was now coming from our right front and all along the left flank; and Montanaro reports in his despatch that it was at this time he became aware that they had built no stockades or Field works, but, adopting their old tactics of 1873–4, were endeavouring to surround the Column.

Grahame and Johnston-Stewart,[1] both Highlanders, with their Niger Hausas and Central Africans, had meantime forced their way through the dense bush on our right and emerged on an open plantation, where, finding the enemy, they rushed them without hesitation towards the right of the village of Dinassi, whilst Crean plied them with case from his big guns. Cobbe's Sikhs, with Eden's and Shortland's companies of Niger Yorubas, had worked over very bad country, covered by steady volleys and a ·303 Maxim gun, and driven the enemy towards the Dinassi road at a point where it made a sharp turn. Montanaro saw this was a favourable opportunity for a general advance, and, directing the guns and Maxims to cease fire, he sounded the charge. Down the road with A Company of Niger Yorubas went Melliss and Captain Stevenson, Manchester Regiment, in command of the company. Cobbe followed suit on the left, and the enemy, in turning to escape him, ran right into Stevenson's men; then began a fight at close quarters, and bayonets were freely used. During this time Melliss, who always appeared to bear a charmed life, although again hit, this time in the stomach by the graze of a bullet, killed two men with his sword. Poor Stevenson was less fortunate; he was also side by side with Melliss, and was killed as his company swept on to the charge.

Kofi Kofia lived to fight yet one more action, and that a decisive one, but to-day he was gone, leaving many of his braves; thirty-four bodies strewed the paths, but the wounded had, as usual, been removed. Our casualties consisted, besides the officer and a Hausa killed, of four severely and two slightly wounded. There is no doubt, in my mind,

[1] Whilst correcting the rough proofs of this sheet I learnt of Johnston-Stewart's death in Somaliland.

that our small losses were the result of good dispositions, helped, of course, by the fact that the enemy had no prepared shelter to cover them, as had invariably been the case formerly. But Montanaro did not at first know this, and showed much common sense in changing his own tactics to meet the altered conditions as soon as he had made the discovery.

Ofinsu was reached next day, and five Chiefs surrendered there. Quantities of supplies and three hundred and twenty guns were also brought in and piled in the main street, whilst the Levies searched the surrounding country. Ofinsu was an important Fetish town, so it was destroyed together with its sacrificial groves; fitting reminder to the people that although we were ready to acknowledge their bravery in the Field, yet we never forgave the murder of harmless British subjects, who had been done to death here and in many of the adjacent villages. On the 26th September the Column re-entered Kumassi, and the last fight, save one more only, of the Ashanti Campaign of 1900 was over.

I found it impossible to keep from the enemy the fact that we intended, immediately Ofinsu had been destroyed, sending a large Force from Kumassi to Berekum, a distance of one hundred miles to the north-west, for the purpose of punishing *en route* many Achuma villages, again opening out the long-closed route, and, if possible, capturing Chief Kobina Cherri, a notorious ruffian, whose life was forfeit. But even had it been possible to keep our intended march quiet for a time, it was evident to all that we must eventually join hands with some of our officers who had been working in Sefwi and near the French borders of the Ivory Coast all through the troubles. Moreover, for weeks past along the extreme west of our Colony had been marching from the sea-coast a small Column under Captain McCorquodale, who was gradually nearing Berekum. This march was well performed, and later on, as will be seen, had an excellent effect on the inhabitants.

For the purpose of carrying out these measures a Force of twelve hundred men had been detailed to be commanded by

Lieutenant-Colonel Montanaro, and all preparations were completed, when, on the evening of the 27th September, spies arrived from the north-west and reported that Chief Kofi Kofia had collected five thousand men, mostly of the hitherto unbeaten tribesmen of Achuma, and was determined to oppose our advance. Several bombastic assurances accompanied the news, such as that he did not believe we would dare to face this tribe; and one fact which turned out true was laid special stress on, viz. that the Achumas intended to fight in the open, and not build any stockades.

I had been a long time watching others fight, and nearly every senior officer had by now had an opportunity of commanding a Column, and consequently I decided to take command this time myself. It was therefore with feelings of thankfulness to Kofi Kofia that I countermanded the original orders and issued fresh ones for an advance at dawn on the 29th of September.

The 30th was a Sunday, which I counted a day of good omen for the Force, for it was on this same day that we had relieved Kumassi and destroyed Kokofu; and now, although owing to a recent accident I had one knee in a splint, I felt I could do quite enough walking and running, if necessary, to be somewhere near the scene of the final struggle between ourselves and the Ashantis.

CHAPTER XXII

1900

PACIFICATION OF THE COUNTRY

TO the reader the description of the incessant bad weather we had to face in Ashanti probably grows monotonous, but to us who had to work and fight in it all, it meant everything. A pouring rain and impassable roads have changed the fate of many a day, as military history frequently records; but although this could not be the case with us, for it was by this time morally certain we must defeat the enemy, it made all the difference as to how far we could follow our success, as also to the hospital returns and the condition of the sick and wounded in general. In any case I really believe of all the vile days we had to endure in that country, none ever surpassed the discomfort of the 29th September. At dawn that day, with twelve hundred Infantry, three 12½-pounder guns, and two 7-pounders, we left Kumassi by the Bantama-Berekum road. I had with me nearly all the Headquarters Staff and a strong contingent of British officers, with plenty of reserve ammunition and rations, in case of our being kept out longer than we expected. Captain Donald Stewart, the Resident, also accompanied the Column.

Six hundred men formed the fighting line, whilst a similar number were told off to watch the baggage and carriers, as I had been warned that the enemy intended attacking these, whilst he kept the remainder engaged to their front. Lieutenant-Colonel Montanaro was in command of the advanced guard of two guns and four companies of Infantry; Major Melliss commanded a Support consisting of one gun and

three companies; Major Cobbe with three hundred and fifty men formed the main body, and was responsible for the safety of the reserve ammunition and rations; whilst bringing up the rear with two hundred men and two 7-pounder guns came Captain Greer, the same officer who had commanded the Adansi Column in July. I myself remained near the head of the Support.

It was as cheerless a morning as can be imagined when we started from the Fort. A heavy drizzle which had continued through the night showed no signs of abating. The roads were as slippery as glass, and at every few hundred yards a bog, a stream, or a narrow nullah had to be manipulated. After leaving the open we entered into the same dreary, dripping forest now so familiar and so hateful to us all. Everyone felt it was going to be an important day, but somehow it was impossible to get up any enthusiasm, whilst the rain made merry down your back and laughed at the feeble protection of mackintosh or great coat. Personally, I felt so disgusted with the whole conditions, that but one wish was uppermost, viz. that the enemy would begin the fighting as soon as possible, and thus afford us a chance of some excitement.

Hour after hour came and went, as slowly the dripping units waded along the track, until towards sundown the advanced guard reached a burnt village—Adada. A few Achuma scouts left as our own came into view, indicating that the enemy must be somewhere in the vicinity. And now commenced such a downpour of rain as even Ashanti could not often boast; the black sky added to the blackness of the giant forest, the water raced down the narrow tracks, quickly reaching to the knees; mighty branches groaned and swayed overhead, and nature appeared to be making a last parting effort to assist our foe. Within the village the scene was exasperating; everything had been burnt by the enemy, and the streets were black. Such walls as remained were tottering, and threatened to come down on anyone unwary enough to seek their protection; and, as if to complete the ludicrous picture, as officers and men arrived and

realised the hopelessness of sleep or food, they plumped their belongings down anywhere, and taking their seats on the pulpy loads, cast a look round and generally went into fits of laughter at the *tout ensemble* of their surroundings.

But white men have a way of surmounting all difficulties, and before it was quite dark most of them had rigged up shelters of some kind with banana leaves and waterproof sheets; where, seated in camp-chairs or on boxes, with their feet in the mire, they were busily engaged in getting rid of a certain amount of stringy-looking tinned meat and sodden biscuits, washed down with whisky and the rain water so easily procurable. A large dose of quinine completed the menu of most of them; and who did or did not sleep that night I carefully avoided inquiring.

Fifty Dengiassi Levies had accompanied the Column, and volunteered to scout ahead. I was not at all anxious to allow this, but the men seemed so keen to go, and swore they were not afraid, that I consented, and, it must be owned, they did remarkably well. Working with our own scouts they were next day the first to give warning of the enemy, and during the fighting had one man killed and two wounded.

At dawn on the 30th September (our lucky Sunday) we left Adada, and, marching under exactly similar conditions to those of the previous day, arrived about eight o'clock at a swift-running stream. I was half-way across this when the sound of firing in the front warned me that the Achumas had kept their word, and meant to fight it out. Montanaro had received such instructions as were necessary, and for the rest I had no intention of interfering with him, unless he himself asked for further orders. He was at liberty to call on Melliss for reinforcements, but the contingent of Sikhs, although they were not pleased at being kept behind, I retained under my own command, to be used only in case of emergency.

The enemy had occupied a long crescent-shaped rise in a depression of the ground, and from the whole front of this position they opened fire. It was soon obvious that they

were using many small-bore rifles, including some of our own ·303 carbines taken in various combats. Montanaro was anxious to discover early whether they were posted behind stockades or not, and by hurrying his leading companies to the front he was soon close enough to see that there were no regular defences, but only rough zerebas and shelters from view. Ordering Captain Charrier's company of Central Africans to his right to work round the enemy's flank, he sent Eden's Yorubas to the left, with their right resting on the main track leading to the enemy's position, whilst Captain St. Hill and Lieutenant Aspinall's company of the West African Regiment prolonged the line to Charrier's right. Owing to the badness of the roads the 12½-pounder guns had been unable to arrive at the head of the Column, but a ·303 Maxim, under Sergeant A. Major, Grenadier Guards, was planted on the road itself, and swept the ground to the immediate front and along each side of the main track.

Charrier kept on gradually advancing on our right, and St. Hill and Aspinall's West African Company, working most pluckily and in perfect order, were gradually driving back the enemy's left, when Montanaro, believing he saw signs of retirement on the part of the Ashantis in his front, sounded the "Cease fire" and the "Charge." The men responded to the call, but the Achumas were no craven foe, and instead of taking to their heels, held their fire, and as our lines rose poured in such heavy volleys that after advancing only a few yards the men lay down and again commenced firing. This was the first occasion since we had adopted bayonet tactics on which our soldiers did not drive their charge home; but the enemy's fire was exceptionally heavy, and had it only been aimed it would have been sheer madness to attempt an advance over the comparatively open ground they had this day selected to fight on. Even as it was, several men were knocked down the instant the lines had risen, and it cannot be expected that young African troops should perform such feats off-hand.

Montanaro sent back word to Melliss, who hurried up

with Captain Luard's company of Central Africans, and these were doubled into the scrub to our left; but, as must be the case in all bush fighting, it was fast becoming impossible to maintain any formation or discover the whereabouts of the different units. The enemy had nowhere retired, although his wings had fallen back (his left considerably so); but his centre was strongly posted, and his whole front covered half a mile. It was difficult under the circumstances to continue our fire without the danger of one unit firing into another, and as our men seemed eager to get on another charge was attempted, but again without success. The truth is, that the open bush country was in this matter of charging helping the enemy, as our men naturally found this a very different game to rushing through scrub, which at least afforded cover from view until they were almost on top of their objective.

The second charge had assisted in still further forcing back the enemy's left, which was now gradually nearing the village of Obassa, but their centre remained practically stationary. I had all this time been moving up the main track, but with one knee in a splint this was not an easy matter on those greasy roads. However, my two Hausa orderlies and others assisted me along, and I arrived at the firing-line just as the second advance had been attempted. I would remark here that for several hundred yards as I advanced a gentleman, commonly known as "Ping Ping," from the fact of his possessing a small-bore quick-firing rifle, which he used at almost every fight, had deliberately followed on our flank at a respectful distance, and several times fired at the Staff; his attentions at last becoming too marked, I sent a couple of volleys from the escort in his direction, which had the desired effect of stopping his target practice.

So rapid had been Montanaro's first advance, and so bad the roads, that by this time the baggage and rear-guards were far behind, and I could hear firing in their direction; but the enemy made no real attempt on either. Seeing how matters stood in our centre, I directed Montanaro to



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DRAWING BY LADY HELEN GRAHAM

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keep up the heaviest possible fire for a few minutes, during which time Captain Godfrey[1] rapidly extended his Sikhs. They were very keen to be let loose; so telling them I would watch their charge, the bugles and drums sounded off, and those splendid specimens of soldiers tore down the slope leading to the enemy's last position, shouting their inspiriting Khalsa war cry. At their head went Godfrey, and mixed up anywhere nearly all the Staff and Departmental officers. I had no wish to see it otherwise, it was the last chance they would get in this prolonged campaign, on which all had toiled, but not all had found the opportunity of seeing the one thing they had hoped to see.

Whilst the Sikhs had been forming up prior to charging, Major Melliss had quickly collected all the men anywhere near him, and, as usual leading the way, he was actually speeding into the thick of the fight in front of Godfrey's men.

This combined charge was the beginning of the end; in every direction prostrate forms sprang to life, and the forests of Achuma rang with the shouts of twenty different races of mankind. Onward swept the soldiers of the Khalsa—once our sternest foes, as to-day our most faithful comrades—and the Ashanti, brave to the last, as he waited the onset, must have imagined those stalwart soldiers from the banks of the Indus, with gleaming eyes, long, curled-in beards, and massive head-dress, the like of which he had never yet seen, were indeed the demons before whom nothing can stand, and tales of which he had so often heard 'neath the shade of his sacred Fetish groves. It was probably the last time the Ashanti and Sikh will ever meet in fight, but the former has nothing to be ashamed of; he stood his ground under circumstances in which far better than he is, had often fled, and several of our men were badly wounded; whilst one in the 36th Sikhs, who had won the Order of Merit (the Indian V.C.) away on the mountains of Tirah, lay dead with his opponent by his side. Melliss, once again in the very forefront of danger, received his fourth wound,

[1] The same day as I corrected this sheet Godfrey was killed in Somaliland.

but this time it was a severe one. He had closed with one of the tribesmen and put his sword through him, both rolling down an embankment, when fortunately Godfrey, who was close by, shot the man dead. Melliss's splendid example on this occasion, coupled with his conspicuous bravery at nearly every fight in Ashanti, won him the Victoria Cross, which decoration he was the first officer to receive from the King after His Majesty's accession. A year later he was obliged, owing to illness, to leave the West African Frontier Force, much to his regret, and later proceeded to join his own regiment in Somaliland with General Manning's expedition; but there, again, the spirit of adventure was too strong in him, and he is now at home recovering from the severe wound inflicted on him by a lion whilst out for a day's shooting.

The final rush from all sides turned the enemy's stubbornness into flight, and flight soon became hopeless panic. They left even wounded on the ground, whilst rifles, ammunition, kegs of powder, guns, and hundreds of other articles lay just as they must have been during the fighting; many hundreds of ·303 cartridges and even two of our own carbines remained. Madly they fled towards Obassa, but Charrier, St. Hill, and Aspinall were now closing in on their left, and presently emerged into the village clearings, causing a stampede; for, fearing their retreat was cut off, the hunted Achumas turned half-left and ran into Eden's advancing Yorubas, whilst the 12½-pounder gun hurrying up to the village sent shell after shell into the forests. As I moved on it became plain what a lesson had been administered. Along the path lay many dead—such splendid-looking fellows, far superior in physique to any I had seen before—and at one turning were seven or eight bunched in all positions. Leaving the road I followed a path, and came on seventeen dead in a heap; some of them were literally riddled with bullets, and had evidently been caught by a Maxim and swept down at a blow. From every side returns came in, but it was necessary to hurry on in pursuit, and full count could not be taken; sixty-two dead

were found in our immediate front, and the Ashantis acknowledged to one hundred and fifty killed, and between three hundred and fifty and four hundred wounded. Our own losses amounted to six officers wounded, viz. Majors Melliss and Willans, Captains Luard, Norfolk Regiment, Charrier, Munster Fusiliers, Pamplin Green, Essex Regiment, and Sergeant-Major Shanley, a fine old veteran of the Army Service Corps, who had come out at the end of his service to see a fight, and was very pleased that he had shot a man who was taking aim at him. Three men were killed and twenty-eight wounded, some very severely.

My former aide-de-camp, Captain Haslewood, had some time before been obliged to leave for the coast, and his place had been taken by Leland, of the Munster Fusiliers. Throughout this day and on subsequent occasions he proved to be a right good companion, but with the usual perversity of things West African he also had eventually to be invalided, thus making four officers who had held this appointment during eight months.

Just as the action of Obassa was over the rain ceased, and a bright sun gave us all a chance of drying the soaking rags on our backs. A hurried meal, and we were again on the march, and could afford to smile at a large, well-built stockade a mile further on, which, needless to say, was not now held, and which served as firewood for the two days we halted at Isansu. Montanaro with a small Column cleared the surrounding villages, the inhabitants hardly waiting his arrival, which in each case was at the double. Isansu was a large and comfortable village, and gave shelter to nearly everyone. One old woman alone remained, and she sat wailing out at intervals in her own tongue, "Run, run, the white men are coming, the white men are coming!" She was much surprised at receiving a tin of rotten curried rabbit from a Hausa, which, however, she greedily devoured, together with a handful of dry tea-leaves.

In order to convince the Achumas that we were not merely birds of passage, but had come to stay as long as it suited us, the next morning Major Cobbe, with two guns and eight

hundred men, followed up the enemy across the Offin river. He found everywhere signs of the panic which had seized them; a few wounded men, many guns, and quantities of baggage were strewn along the road, but not a single armed Ashanti was seen. Another old woman (they are never afraid!) was met, and she repeated her Ofinsu sister's tale, and added that the enemy were flying faster than we could hope to move, notwithstanding that they were carrying scores of wounded along with them. Cobbe crossed the Offin, which was in high flood, only with the greatest difficulty, and then moved on five miles to Fufu, which was reached by ten p.m. The trials of that march are well told by Montanaro in his interesting book, *The Ashanti Campaign of 1900*, of which he and Captain Armitage, D.S.O., are the joint authors. An indestructible tree stockade was met, which, as a test, it was attempted to destroy, but twelve 18-lb. shells failed to make any impression—a nasty barrier, had it been held.

The return march to Isansu took over twelve hours, officers and men having to wade over and over again through swamps up to their chests; yet not a load was lost, and when I met the Column coming in I never heard a grumble. It was positively astonishing how the Europeans ever kept their health and strength at all under the climatic trials they so pluckily bore; and as for the African soldiers, I can only say that I am convinced that for this kind of work they are quite unequalled in the empire. I felt, however, they could not go on for ever, and yet it must be remembered we had received all the reinforcements we were to get, and whatever else had to be done must be done with the same men now with us. Meantime I said nothing, for I then knew what they did not, viz. that after a short rest one more long and trying march must be made, for which twelve hundred men at least would be needed, and that was to be right through the whole of Ashanti-land, from Kumassi almost to the French borders of the Ivory Coast, in order finally to open up communications, and, by a display of strength along one of their chief routes, to convince the

people that we could not only beat them wherever met, but could follow them into their hitherto unknown forests, and search them out in their most difficult fastnesses. That done, I felt I might honestly report to the Secretary of State that the Field Force had completed its work.

There was also another reason why I did not wish to divulge this plan prematurely. I felt that the Colonial Office itself might, after the enemy's defeat at Obassa, feel satisfied that enough had been done to render it advisable to close the operations. This view, if taken, I could not have shared, for until the Kumassi-Berekum road in the north-western portion of the country had been opened to trade, and the Kumassi-Kintampo road rendered safe, with telegraphic communication established right through to the sea, it could not be said that the rebellion was entirely suppressed. Moreover, there were still several leading Chiefs who must either surrender or be taken prisoners, and I felt sure another three months would see all these things accomplished. They were, in fact, all accomplished within the time, and the extra labour to the troops and expense to the State were, in my opinion, thereby well repaid.

On the 3rd October we all got back to Kumassi, and the comforts of a tub and a change of clothes were seldom better appreciated. Two days later a big Durbar took place, at which Donald Stewart introduced several Chiefs, amongst whom were Juabin, Mampon, and others—all familiar names—but I felt sure in my own mind they had very little loyalty between the lot. What interested me far more was that I was able to show them some Maxim practice, and the results of a few shots from a Vickers-Maxim quick-firing gun. It struck me that Juabin and Co. appeared very pleased at the thought that they had not been so foolish as to necessitate their presence in the muzzle direction of those ugly-looking weapons.

By the middle of October a modified amnesty was proclaimed, and warnings sent out that no further trials for high treason would take place. The weather continued atrocious, heavy thunderstorms visiting Kumassi frequently,

but they held out hopes of the end of the rains, which hopes soon vanished when a few days later it set in wet again.

I had fixed on the 18th October for the visit of the loyal King of Bekwai to Kumassi, and I was determined he should be received, not only in a fitting official manner, but as our friend. It turned out one of the brightest days we had known in the country, and I met the old Chief outside the Fort; a small guard gave him a salute and the massed fife and drum bands played lively tunes in very good style. He was hugely delighted, and although I was aware that officially he ranked after Juabin and others, all that I forgot for the time being; his goodness to the sick and wounded had placed him on a new list as far as I was concerned. There were some sour faces amongst the Ashanti onlookers as he moved through the ranks of soldiers, who thoroughly understood the situation, and turned out in hundreds to greet him, but the King could afford to be happy to-day. He came up into my rooms in the Fort; and Donald Stewart also showed him every courtesy, although he could not in his official position join in as we did in honouring him. I personally shaped my official position for the day to suit the occasion. The devoted loyalty of the man during times of terrible stress for him could not be forgotten. When he left we all saw him off, and the Bekwai Chief is not likely to forget his visit; he was accompanied the whole way to his town, about twenty-four miles, by an escort of Hausas and Yorubas.

To while away time we held a rifle meeting in Kumassi. Donald Stewart offered a purse and I gave a cup. There were plenty of entries, and it made a change in the monotony of garrison life. My old acquaintance, Quartermaster-Sergeant Mulgrue, of whom I told a story in Chapter VII., arrived on the 20th October, and I appointed him Garrison Sergeant-Major in Kumassi, an important post, which he held with credit. After the expedition he received a commission.

During the closing days of October several Columns visited all the surrounding country, and destroyed many villages

which were known to have sheltered the murderers of a European trader, killed when the rebellion first broke out. No opposition worth the name was offered, and, in fact, for miles round Kumassi to the north and west the land was now deserted. Messages were constantly sent informing the people that they might come in and surrender, and by degrees they were doing so; but it was necessary to keep a sharp look-out, and prevent the possibility of any further gatherings of clans.

The last few days of October were spent in cleansing the precincts of the Fort, and Captain Holford's destroying hand was in evidence on every side. Enormous fires burnt down whole regions of huts. The fugitive Adansis had been collecting in hundreds for months past, seeking the protection of the white man against whom they had so basely turned in the hour of trial; for it must be remembered that prior to the expedition of 1895 this tribe as such had practically ceased to exist, and had been then reinstated by our own Government. These traitors had been once more harboured by us, and were now permitted to return to their homes. The scene of their late residence sadly needed purification, and hardly had they quitted than their vast camp was ablaze. At the same time many thousand Levies were sent back to their homes, and the pungent smoke from hundreds of fires daily cast a pall over the Fort, which generally hung over it till evening, when it was swept away by gales, which at this time of year were of common occurrence.

During October severe sickness raged amongst the followers, and a great many soldiers were also prostrated; small-pox was responsible for most of this; and anæmia, the result of poor food and hard work, also made sad inroads; whilst sore legs, covered with masses of hideous ulcers, and blistered feet, both the results of incessant wading through mire and fetid slime, were the cause of hundreds of men being in hospital. The officers' wards, too, were full of patients; and as I myself daily grew stronger and was able to walk long distances at a time, I generally spent an hour or

so every morning in the hospitals. It was a great pleasure to be again able to do this, and I often noticed the black soldiers would rise, by a great effort, to say, "Thank you, big white man, now we shall soon recover." Poor fellows, how pleased I was to have earned their gratitude.

Meantime, as if our own difficulties at the Front were not sufficient, at the Base at Cape Coast some medical wiseacres started a scare that cerebro-spinal-meningitis had broken out and was killing off numbers of followers. Owing to this a Medical Board decided that quarantine was necessary, and in consequence, at a moment's notice, every arrangement for embarking and disembarking troops, followers, sick, and wounded was entirely upset. Fortunately our P.M.O., Doctor McDowell, was a power in the land in such matters, and after a lot of mischief had been caused and much money wasted in telegraphing all over the Colonies of the West Coast he was able to prove that the whole story was a myth, and that quarantine should never have been imposed at all. Once again, therefore, shipping troubles were disposed of, and the work of the expedition proceeded.

Under 1st November in my Staff diary I find: "No fox-hunting here, but Montanaro started to-day to hunt the Ashanti instead." The reference was to the start of a Column under command of that officer for the final march through Ashanti-land, which was to be the end of all operations. Leaving him to traverse the two hundred miles of forest and prairie, I will, before describing his march and the important results it produced, relate briefly what took place in Kumassi to the date of his return.

To my regret McDowell, our P.M.O., left West Africa during November; and the two Nursing Sisters from the West African Frontier Force in Nigeria, Matron Ward and Sister Neville, who had done splendid work, having been long over their time on the Coast, also left us. We were all pleased to hear that they both received the Royal Red Cross for their services.

During the many months that chaos reigned in Ashanti the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast had fortunately

remained quiet under the administration of Major Sheppard; and it was a most interesting document I received from him on the 5th November, informing me that he needed no reinforcements of troops, except to make up the numbers Major Morris had brought away with him when, in answer to Sir Frederic Hodgson's summons, he had left for Kumassi; even these, he stated, need only be sent when it was quite convenient. Considering that these territories, so many hundred miles from the coast, had been practically cut off for months past, I thought Sheppard's letter a most unselfish one, proving him to have been the right man in the place.

The same day as I received his letter, by a coincidence, the necessary orders for reinforcements to start for the Northern Territories had been issued. Such men of the Gold Coast Battalion as had marched down with Sir Frederic Hodgson, and again been found fit for service, had arrived from the coast, with their own officers, and these latter, supplemented by a few volunteers from Special Service officers, and with two 7-pounder guns and large supplies of ammunition, clothing, and European rations, reached Kintampo before the end of November, thus freeing me of all further doubt regarding those outside regions.

The cessation of hostilities was seized on by the various gold-mining companies, and frequently by those who had no claim of any sort to such title, to push up stores, machinery, etc., from Cape Coast; and by the offer of larger sums than those paid by Government for labour we soon found our carriers were so far reduced in numbers as to make it impossible to bring up sufficient military stores for our requirements to the Prah. This was an important matter, and I therefore issued orders that no European was to be allowed north of the Prah without a written pass permitting him to proceed; at the same time the Base Commandant was instructed to issue no passes without reference to Kumassi. The desired effect was soon produced, as prospectors found it was of no use arriving at Prahsu, there to be indefinitely detained, without any

means of replenishing their food supplies, whilst their stores and machinery rapidly deteriorated in the open.

On the 17th November I left Kumassi on a visit to the Posts along the Line of communications. How different was the travelling now to what we had known it on our weary upward marches; the weather had slightly moderated, though it was still bad enough, but the pace was something new in Ashanti; no scouts or advanced guard detained us; instead, we hurried along, covering mile on mile in less than twenty minutes. At Esumeja I was given a specially furnished quarter, but had cause to regret the attention, for during the night a violent storm passed over the Fort and selected my room as its centre of gravity, with the consequence that I was clean washed out. The particular acrimony with which I regarded this quite uncalled-for personal attack on the part of the elements still clings to me whenever I recall Esumeja. With a small escort I went over the ruins of Kokofu; there was no sign of a living thing within call. The remnants of the three stockades which had so long foiled us were still untouched, and I was struck by the extent of the works, but more especially by the deep trenches and blind-pits in rear, evidently meant to have stopped our people once they were over the actual barrier, and thus detained them under fire. Like savages, it never struck their engineers that if they would stop us at all it would be better to do so before we got too close to them, for once there, it needed something better than Ashantis to force back Queen's troops.

Next day on the way to Kwissa, at the junction of the Bekwai and main tracks, I was met by the King of Bekwai. He was responsible for all this portion of the road, and it was in vile order, so I was naturally not over-polite to him. The old Chief appeared much distressed, and told me I should find it all right on the return journey. It certainly was not all right, but had been much improved, and as I approached the huge gangs at work I saw the cause; the village head-man of Essian Kwanta had been fined heavily, and was now taking the change out of his villagers. With

a long elephant-hide whip he was dashing about the bush, laying his lash on to anyone he could reach — man, woman, or child; and the alacrity with which the hundreds of workpeople were moving, convinced me that even such a climate does not of necessity kill all energy. I was back in Kumassi by the 22nd November, and the following two days the Berekum Columns also returned, thus ending the last of the punitive expeditions of the campaign.

The march of these two Columns was a very interesting episode; but as Montanaro has himself told the story so well in his book, *The Ashanti Campaign of 1900*, previously referred to, all I mean to do is to describe briefly his movements, and the important results which immediately followed.

Lieutenant-Colonel Montanaro, with one 12½-pounder gun and seven hundred men, left Kumassi on the 1st November for Berekum, one hundred miles to the north-west. Besides detachments from every corps, he had with him the Sikhs, under Major Cobbe, and amongst his other officers was Captain Lyon, R.A., lately arrived from Ladysmith, who was about to add to his experience of a besieged town the sensation of a march through a very different sort of country. Captains Carleton, Thorne, and Pamplin Green were attached to his Staff. He was followed next day by a second Column of five hundred men, commanded by Major Brown, Leinster Regiment, with Captain Stallard and our "Pioneer" Captain, Neal, as Staff officers. Marching in this order the two Columns united at Insuta on the 5th November, No. 2 having made a forced march on this last day. As the Commander reported in his despatch, it would be only repeating the story of the past seven months to endeavour to explain the toils and labours of the troops in an "impossible country," over "still more impossible roads"; but all were unanimous in stating that the march, taken all round, was just about as much as flesh and blood could endure.

The weather, which had lately shown signs of clearing up, again set in wet; terrible storms, accompanied by lightning, constantly burst over the camps, turning every-

thing into quagmires. The Columns were continually wading rivers and swamps, and on the top of all, that horrible disease small-pox broke out and soon laid low large numbers of soldiers and followers. Montanaro, in his bitterness of soul (a bitterness I had often felt myself), wrote: "A soldier is prepared to put up with indifferent food, hard beds, and similar discomforts; but when it comes to eating that food and sleeping in that bed in a fetid, malarious swamp, inches deep in mud and slime, and with water above and below, it is a little too much." Yes, indeed! the trials were often almost too much to endure, and those who bore them once can have little desire to repeat the experience.

For some days it appeared doubtful whether Chief Kobina Cherri might offer resistance, and all kinds of rumours and messages reached the camp; but the late lessons had been severe, and he could collect no gathering. On the 6th November, owing to an alarmist report made by some of our wandering carriers, a company of Infantry was sent out to reconnoitre, and mistaking a camp of our advanced Levy scouts for the enemy, some firing took place, resulting in six of the friendly Juabins being unfortunately killed. The remainder, however, behaved very reasonably, and the relatives of the victims were, of course, well recompensed in a monetary point of view. A few of those who did not realise the situation, and were unable to reach their arms when fired on, made a clean bolt of it, and arrived in Kumassi two days later with a report that both Columns had been destroyed, and that they were the sole survivors.

At the town of Bechim three important Chiefs came in and surrendered. Advantage was here taken of requisitioning large quantities of supplies for a garrison of three hundred and fifty men, which, under command of Major Gordon, was to remain as a reserve till the remainder returned from Berekum. The fast-increasing cases of small-pox also made it necessary to form a temporary Base hospital. Captain Johnston-Stewart the same day destroyed the large village of Jemo, and rescued several prisoners who had been held as slaves for the past six months. Montanaro, with eight

hundred and fifty men and over a thousand carriers, moved on, and Tanosu was reached on the 10th November. Here several more Chiefs surrendered themselves to him, and punishment was meted out to such villages as were on the "black list."

The next day the Column entered Odumassi, the largest town till then seen in Ashanti, and the centre of the rubber trade in that part of the country. The King's residence was a fine building, and, as if to testify to its greatness, the walls had been smeared with human blood. Leaving three hundred men in Odumassi, with a Column now reduced to five hundred, Montanaro marched eighteen miles to Suatru, on the extreme borders of Ashanti, and arrived at the friendly town of Berekum on the 13th November. Here the King, who had behaved most loyally throughout the troubles, gave the troops a great welcome, and was publicly thanked for his services.

At Berekum was a small escort of Gold Coast Hausas, under Lieutenant St. John, and thus in this distant spot our troops exchanged friendly greetings, after having traversed for the first time, in any considerable body, those mighty forests of darkest West Africa. As if to complete the *dénoûment*, on this same day arrived fifty more Hausas, with Captain McCorquodale, of the Southern Niger Battalion, accompanied by three other British officers; they had marched in from Parmu after having traversed the whole of the western boundaries of the Gold Coast Colony from the sea. They reported that all the tribes on those frontiers had proved friendly.

The return march was commenced on the 14th November, and on arrival at Odumassi it was found that the arch-villain, Kobina Cherri, had been captured and was a prisoner in our camp. The method of his capture I quote from Montanaro's own account: "Major Brown received information that Kobina Cherri was in hiding at a village called Suinjam, about two hours' march from Odumassi, and despatched Lieutenants Kingston and De Putron, each with two sections of the 1st and 2nd West African Frontier

Force. Daniells, a native officer from Southern Nigeria, accompanied them. On arriving near the village Lieutenant Kingston ordered the four sections to surround it, and the manœuvre was carried out without the inhabitants being aware of their presence. Both these officers had been with Captain Carleton when he made similar attempts to capture Kobina Cherri, and he had carefully instilled into their minds the principle of caution when surrounding a village. His instructions bore good fruit, for on entering the place the people, running hither and thither, were unable to break through the cordon of soldiers, and Daniells, who understood the Ashanti language, heard them shouting to one particular man to hide himself. Suspecting him to be someone of importance, he gave chase and seized him. The captive turned out to be Kobina Cherri, and he was brought back a prisoner to Odumassi."

Two days were employed in levelling Odumassi with the ground; it was a sink of iniquity which needed entire purging, for within its walls, even during the last few months, many unfortunate victims had been cruelly done to death; and Kobina Cherri, as he watched the destruction, must have foreseen in it the doom that awaited him. Finally the place was prematurely set on fire, and very nearly caused a disaster to the rear-guard as it was leaving. By great exertion the sick were got out, and the last of the officers and men had to run for their lives. From Odumassi to Tanosu, and Tanosu to Bechim, where many villages had to pay the penalty of their crimes, the route of the punitive Column was watched with impotent wrath by the followers of Chiefs who had cast in their lot with the rebels, some of them now flying wherever they might lay their heads, and others concealing themselves in what they believed to be the impenetrable forests of Ahafu. But the people of the country themselves were now volunteering to bring in the recalcitrant Chiefs, and as many as a thousand men from Wam alone had started on the warpath to search out these very forests.

The assistance rendered to us by the French authorities

along the frontiers of their Colony of the Ivory Coast now stood us in good stead, for had the Ashantis been in any way encouraged by the thought that they could, as a last resource, make a bolt across our borders, they might, according to all reports received by me, have made up their minds to prolong their resistance. It is due to the French officials to state, that so far from giving them any hopes of finding a refuge in their territories, they let them plainly understand that the enemies of England were their enemies also, and thereby showed a most friendly spirit to our country at a time when friends were few and far between.

The end was fast approaching, and officers and men, carriers, and even the sick, appeared to take a new lease of life after leaving Bechim; covering seventy-eight miles in five days, an average of over fifteen miles a day, an extraordinary pace in that difficult country after so many trials, and favoured by a break in the rains, the two Columns reached Kumassi on the 23rd and 24th November respectively, bringing in their train thirty-one Chiefs as prisoners, nine hundred guns, and five thousand pounds of valuable rubber.

The whole march was admirably performed, and reflected the highest credit on Montanaro, his officers and men, and last, but by no means least, on those faithful people the carriers. We all turned out as the Columns marched in and gave them a hearty reception. Kumassi must have appeared a perfect haven of rest to men who had toiled and fought for long months past, and now felt their task was finished with credit to themselves.

Amongst some souvenirs given to me by the officers was a fine donkey from Berekum; it was the first equine creature I had seen for seven months. I took it down to the coast when I left, and gave it as a Christmas present to my Private Secretary, Mr. Russell.

On the 27th November I received news from Captain McCorquodale at Wam. He had taken advantage of the march of the Columns to Berekum, and proceeded to Memm, then said to be the largest town in Ashanti, with a small

escort; the place surrendered without an attempt at resistance. He added that all the Ahafu Chiefs were on their way to meet him at Wam, and that he had placed small garrisons at Asafu, Parmu, Memm, and Berekum.

It now appeared to me that nothing remained undone that was necessary for the subjugation of the rebellion, and on the 25th November I telegraphed to the Secretary of State for the Colonies that the campaign was over.

Kobina Cherri, of Odumassi, who had been captured as already related, was tried by Military Commission and sentenced to death. The charges against this cruel Chief were many; suffice it to say amongst them was one of seizing over fifty British subjects, whom, after cutting off their hands and committing other unmentionable atrocities, he drove into the forests to perish. His attitude was most defiant, but after he had been informed that he was to be hanged next morning he asked to see me. I went to the guardroom, and he then said if I pardoned him he would inform me of the hiding-place of not only a large amount of treasure, but also of the golden stool. I told him he might do both as a last good act on earth, but that die he must on the morrow. Early next morning he again asked to see me, and, thinking he might have some information to give, I went to his cell. He again asked if there was no hope for him, and I replied, "None"; to my disgust he then said, as he must die he would at least inform me of the whereabouts of a great friend of his who had really been the murderer of our people, and not he himself. He gave the directions which we afterwards turned to account. So, even when eternity faced him, his last thought was to give away a comrade. He marched quite coolly to the scaffold, and spat on the ground as he passed two wretched Crepé traders, whose entire families he had tortured to death, and who had tremblingly given evidence against him on his trial. At the scaffold he stood as erect as a soldier, and everyone present was impressed by his bearing. After he was dead several unfortunate Crepés, all of whom had suffered severely at his hands, and who had to the last moment kept them-

selves hidden from fear of the man, rushed out from the crowds and danced and shouted with joy at the thought that the scourge of Odumassi was no more.

From this date onwards it was a case of seeing off corps, detachments, and companies with whom I had served for so many months, and in whose ranks I had many staunch friends, both amongst officers and men. I held a final parade, at which I thanked all ranks in the best words I could find, although I knew whatever I said would but ill express what I felt. In Ashanti it had been a case of living alongside the men; and, moreover, the numbers being comparatively small, I had seen the same faces so often that I felt I knew almost every individual. It was especially bitter bidding farewell to my Niger soldiers of the West African Frontier Force; from savage to recruit, from recruit to fighting man, I had known them all well, and how faithfully they had served! I had been their first "big white man" (or supreme Commander), and they had till then known no other; and after I had walked down their ranks for the last time, I was glad to get away by myself.

On the night of the 1st December I had the honour of being entertained at a farewell dinner by the officers of the West African Regiment. Everyone in Kumassi was present, and the rooms of the Ashanti Company's trading office, which had at one time answered as the headquarters of the enemy's besieging Force, this night wore a very different aspect. Flags of all kinds, guns, rifles, swords, knives, and even peaceful roses from the Basel mission gardens, had turned the store-room into a smart dining-hall; and the best fare that such a country could produce was served up on clean table-cloths. We passed a most pleasant evening, and after dinner adjourned to an open-air sing-song, which was also attended by hundreds of soldiers, many of whom had never seen such a thing before. The topical songs were very amusing, and brought in all the local characters, from Commander to drummer.

The next day was my last in Kumassi, and I took a look round all the familiar spots; roses were in bloom where

corpses had lain thick; vegetable and fruit grew below the bastions, where crouching followers had for months sought shelter from a merciless foe; the Hausa and the Ashanti, like the lion and lamb of fable, were drawing water together from Prempeh's wells; the market was in full swing, as if nothing had ever occurred to make it otherwise; and the general peace that seemed to reign only brought into stronger contrast the terrible realities of a short five months past, when thousands of men, women, and children on that very spot were literally counting the hours that still remained to them, whilst a cruel enemy was equally counting the days when the white man's power would crumble. In my diary I find recorded: "Last day in Kumassi—wonder if I shall ever see it again?"

CHAPTER XXIII

1900–1901

DEPARTURE FROM ASHANTI—AND CONCLUSION

ON the 3rd December, 1900, I left Kumassi for the last time. Outside the Fort gate were assembled all the Europeans in the place, whilst the roads were lined with troops, and guns thundered out a farewell salute. Beyond the limit of the forest clearance the lines of soldiers were replaced by the Levies of Native Chiefs; hundreds of umbrellas and many chairs of state borne on men's shoulders formed a bright background to the gun-bearers, who kept on firing salutes at such alarmingly short distances that it became necessary to keep a sharp look-out as we approached each different clan. Amid the din of war drums each Chief as we passed him came forward and saluted; and at the end of all this barbaric display I bade farewell to Donald Stewart, who had accompanied us so far, to Burroughs, and to all my other comrades, and, turning a corner in the road, had left Kumassi behind me for ever.

Instead of travelling down by the main road I had arranged with the manager of the Ashanti Gold Fields Corporation to pay a visit to Obuassi, the headquarters of the Company, situated about thirty-two miles south of Bekwai; in consequence we turned off at Esumeja, and reached Bekwai the same evening as guests of the King. Two miles from the town we were met by large crowds of men, women, and children; the first were mostly carrying guns, drums, and branches, and creating a terrific din, wildly firing off their guns in every direction. The women,

who were exceedingly lightly clad for the occasion, had adorned themselves by smearing their bodies above the waist with white paint, and presented a weird appearance; the children carried banners and branches, and were as noisy as their parents. The strangest bevy of all, however, consisted of about ten children, converts of the missionary, Jones, who were clad in white, and droned out hymns.

After leaving Bekwai we passed through many villages, at each of which the inhabitants greeted us as above, and we reached Obuassi on the 5th December. I was much surprised by the general appearance of the settlement; trim buildings stand on elevated spots in the middle of a fine clearance in the forest; sufficient trees had been left to afford shade along the sides of the roads, while good tracks lead to all the outbuildings, followers' barracks, machinery houses, etc. In the afternoon we were shown over the borings, and initiated into the mysteries of extracting gold from quartz. The Ashanti troubles had, of course, thrown all work into arrears, and washing had only recommenced a couple of days before our arrival. I was allowed a scrape over the metal plates which retain the gold, and took away a small lump as a memento of the visit. We all enjoyed our stay, which was added to by the hospitality of Mr. Daw, the manager, and Mr. Gordon. Obuassi had never at any time been an unhealthy spot, and the common sense shown by the Company in providing well for its employés has tended to keep down the sick list to quite normal conditions. With the advent of the railway, now I am told fast nearing completion, in my opinion this station should become a favourite one in that part of the Colony.

From Obuassi we marched to Fumsu, crossing a steep part of the Moinsi hills; it had poured with rain the previous night, and the climb took me two hours. The Ashanti Gold Fields Company, with all its enterprise, had never made any kind of attempt to construct a road to its head-quarters, and we found heavy bits of machinery and other metal articles lying on the hillside, or in the swamps below, evidently left by carriers during the rebellion, and which it

was difficult to believe could ever be got along such execrable paths. I was told it was their policy to leave the communications as bad as possible, as otherwise they feared the long-promised railway from the sea-coast might never become an accomplished fact.

Fumsu was by this time quite a model post; Major Weston, of the Liverpool Regiment, had converted a swamp into a neatly built station, with good barracks, and quite a scientific-looking bridge over the Fum. Captain Wilson's grave had been removed from the river's bank, where it was always liable to be flooded, to a higher spot inland, and was kept in good order.

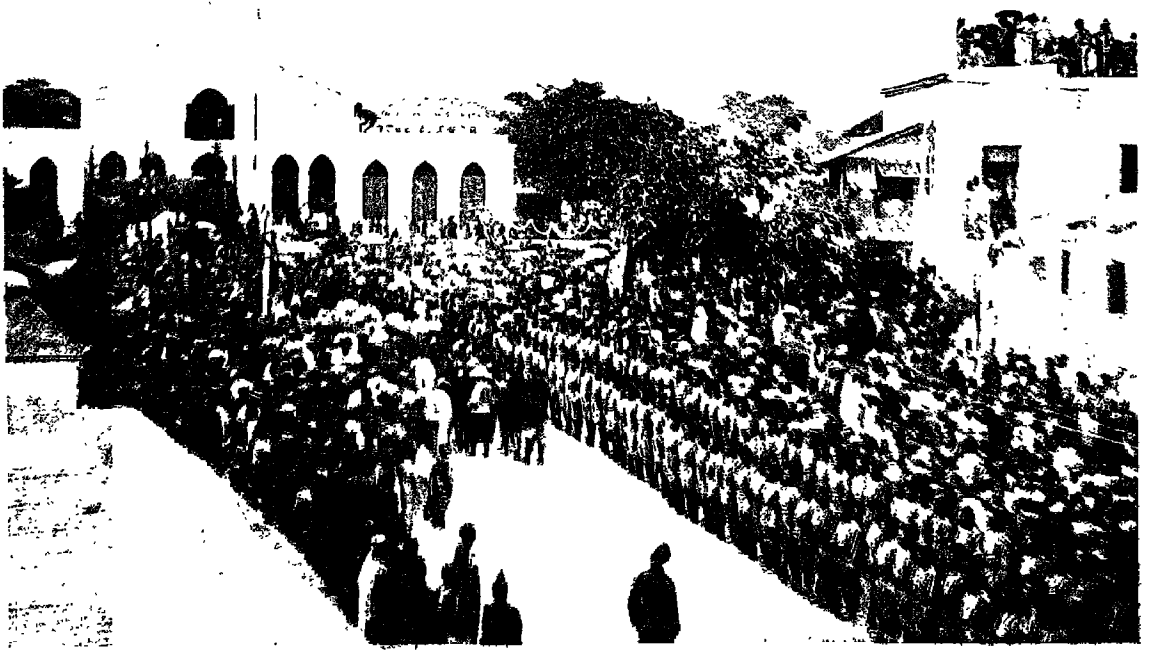
At Prahsu, where we arrived on the 8th, and which was commanded by Major Sladen, great improvements were visible; in fact, so many trees had been cut down and clearances effected, that I hardly recognised in it the miserable, dark, unwholesome camp of six months past.

After leaving Prahsu we constantly met Europeans, with long strings of carriers, northwards bound; also merchants, shopkeepers, traders, all bent on business north of the Prah. A most welcome present awaited us two days from the coast—a carrier laden with half a dozen bottles of soda-water, buried in ice, the kind thought of the European community of Cape Coast. None of us had tasted anything approaching a cool drink for many months past, and fervent were our good wishes for those who had remembered this fact, as we allowed the iced liquid to trickle down our throats.

One remarkable change struck me after leaving the Prah: the impossible track had been converted into a really good road. Substantial planked bridges crossed most of the rivers and streams, raised causeways rose above the horrid swamps, and, in short, the hand of the engineer was visible everywhere. If the campaign had done nothing else for the Colony, our incessant demands for better communications, and the power I possessed of granting money for such necessary works, were in themselves a blessing they might well be thankful for.

For a couple of days the forests had been growing thinner, and on the 12th December we at last emerged from the dense tree belt and got into comparatively open country. During the night we had been able to hear the sea as it thundered in mile-long breakers along the coast, and now were all eager to actually see with our eyes the great ocean whose waters would bear us home. Five miles from Cape Coast I met a European gold prospector, who was sitting by the roadside while his carriers took a rest. I greeted him, and he said, "By Jove, this is a hot country; and what slow going!" I could not help replying, "You are in Piccadilly at present, but in a couple of days you will begin to understand what heat and slow travelling mean." He, however, evidently had no intention of understanding anything of the kind, for a week later I met him in the streets of the town. I do not know if he ever started north again. I should say not.

As we approached Cape Coast, it became evident that the inhabitants meant to give us a warm welcome. Two miles out we were met by deputations, and found refreshment booths supplied with all kinds of luxuries; flags fluttered along the roadsides, and the crowds were most respectful and enthusiastic. The Government had sanctioned a public holiday; all business places were closed, and the town was enjoying itself. To the music of several bands we marched for a couple of miles, and the whole scene seemed so different to what our departure had been, the streets now being packed with people who cheered lustily. At the Central Square we were met by Mr. O'Brien, the District Commissioner, the different Government officials, all the leading Native gentlemen, and several of the loyal Chiefs of the southern portion of the Colony. I was presented with an address, in acknowledging which I was glad to bear testimony to the gallantry, devotion, and loyalty of our faithful black soldiers. Nowhere could the people have shown more gratitude for the return of peace to their country, and the memory of our reception will always remain as a great compliment to the Field Force.



ENTRANCE TO THE CAPE COAST CASTLE

To face page 10.

There was plenty still to be done before I sailed for England. Every day troops or carriers embarked for East Africa or some of our Colonies. Lying off the old Dutch castle might be seen huge Transports, the like of which had never before visited these parts; they had been temporarily diverted from conveying troops to South Africa for the purpose of taking back the Central African regiments and followers. By the hand of Mr. Tate, who had come in charge of carriers from East Africa, I sent a handsome palanquin chair, captured at Kokofu, to the Sultan of Zanzibar, as a memento of the services rendered by his subjects.

On the 21st December I attended a ball given by the ladies of Cape Coast. All except two of my Staff had left for England, but the remaining British officers then in Cape Coast were present. The castle buildings, which lend themselves well to decoration, were very prettily got up and lighted, and the music was good. An excellent supper was provided, and I already began to think that rough life in the bush was more conducive to health than such gargantuan feasts in tropical climates.

A visit to the fine old Dutch castle of Elmina, eight miles further to the west, well repaid one for a hot walk. It is remarkable how solidly the Dutch constructed all their forts and buildings along the coast; some of the ditches at Elmina are scarped out of the solid rock, and the central tower commands a view for miles. The walls are high and massive, and the masonry looks as if it had been meant to last for ages. Our own building attempts on the coast appear feeble in comparison, and they all point to one cause, viz. economy; reminding one of Kipling's description of the Indian Prince who was particularly desirous of getting a British decoration, and set about it by "nearly building a city drain." So many things in West Africa have been "nearly" done well, but there, unfortunately, they have suddenly stopped short.

Before sailing for England I went by sea, at the invitation of His Excellency, Sir Mathew Nathan, the newly appointed

Governor of the Gold Coast, on a short visit to Accra, the capital of the Colony. I was accompanied by Mr. Haddon Smith, C.M.G., and Major Willans, the two last-remaining Staff officers in the country. We were most cordially received by the inhabitants of Accra, who presented an address of welcome. It was a great surprise to me, as although I had known Cape Coast had intended honouring us, I had no idea of any further ovations in store. My stay with the Governor was a very pleasant change after the toils of Ashanti, and a rest we appreciated.

The steamer *Bornu*, Commander Hely, the same ship I had gone out in sixteen months previously, appeared indeed a floating palace to us now, and as she steamed out of Accra roads and headed for the west,

> "Our dreams were of old England's welcome shore,
> Of toils rewarded and of labours o'er."

I found on board a telegram from our Consul at Grand Canary, inviting me to dine with the British community during our stay there; and when thirteen days later we steamed into Las Palmas harbour, we found the ships decorated with bunting from stem to stern, whilst their syrens gave out weird welcomes. At the "Metropole," which is a first-class hotel, and at this time of year full of English visitors, I was more than surprised by the great welcome awaiting us.

On the night of the 20th January we anchored in Plymouth harbour, but all my joy was dashed to the ground by the awful news that our good Queen was dying at Osborne. It seemed so impossible that she could be taken from us, and now it was only too true. What mattered my own thoughts, when millions of others would soon be in mourning; but I could not help feeling the personal sorrow that I should never have the satisfaction of hearing her voice, and I had hoped (knowing the interest she had for years taken in Ashanti) that with her usual thoughts for her soldiers, however humble, Her Majesty might have honoured me by a command to attend her presence.

The next day, on my arrival at Paddington, I was surprised to find that nearly every officer in the United Kingdom who had served in Ashanti was present on the platform. I had received no intimation, nor indeed did I even know that they were aware of my arrival in the country, so the honour was totally unexpected. This gathering was a special delight to me, although it was most difficult to recognise most of them, clad in frock coats and tall hats, instead of the damp khakee in which I had known them for many long months.

I was permitted to take my small share at the funeral of the Queen, where I was in command of the West African Colonial Contingent, and was thus able to feel that I too had paid my last humble tribute of respect to the great Sovereign in whose service it had been my exceeding good fortune to spend my life.

And now I was back in England I found that my countrymen, notwithstanding the stirring times through which the nation was then passing in South Africa, did not mean to allow the work done by their faithful African soldiers on the West Coast to pass unnoticed. Indeed, so far from this being the case, I received daily proofs that not only in London and Liverpool, which latter was, of course, intimately connected with West African trade, but in other cities of England great interest had been taken in our doings.

The 11th July, 1901, will ever remain a proud memory with me, for on that day I had the rare honour of receiving at the Guildhall the Freedom of the City of London and a sword of honour. Both gifts were made to me personally, but in receiving them I well understood that the Court of Common Council had recognised thereby the gallant services of the officers, British non-commissioned officers, Sikhs, and African soldiers who so faithfully, loyally, and ungrudgingly had given their strength, health, and lives in the service of their Sovereign.

The story I had to tell, of twenty-four years spent mostly on Active Service, from the rugged hills of Kabul and

Afghanistan to the pathless forests of Ashanti, is finished; and if by reading it any of my countrymen have been better able to appreciate the ups and downs, the joys and labours of a simple soldier's life, then I shall have succeeded in my endeavours, which have been, not only to show that of all the callings in life none affords better opportunities of seeing for oneself how this mighty Empire of Great Britain has risen to and remains in its foremost place amongst the nations of the world, but taking the personal element into account, no profession offers a fairer field for success, without partiality or favour, than the Army of the King.

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