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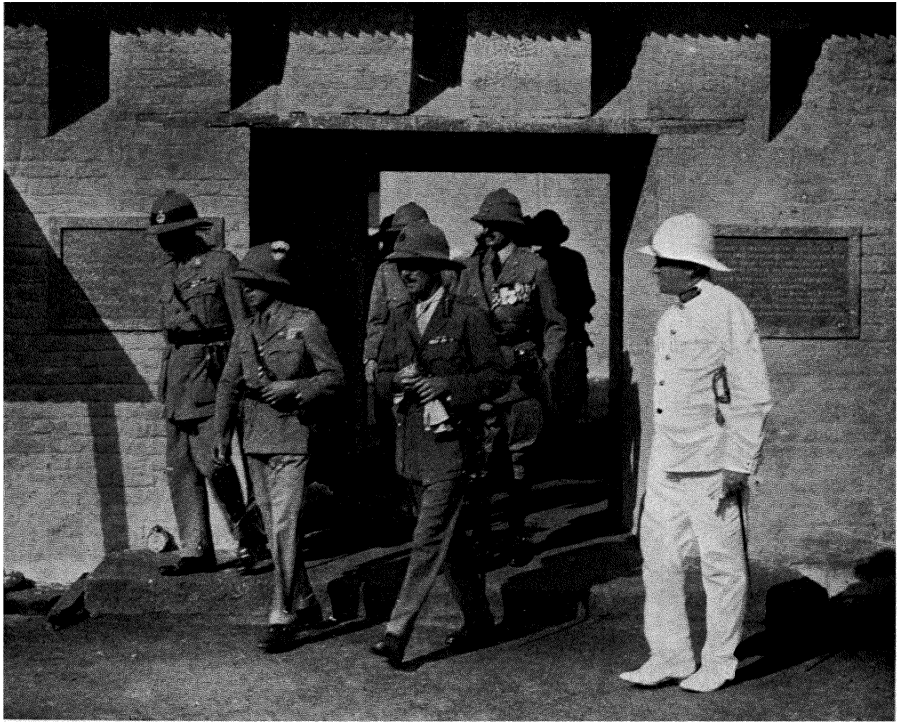


Photo : Central News

H.R.H. the Duke of Windsor (then Prince of Wales) inspecting the Fort at Kumasi

THE GREAT DRAMA OF KUMASI

BY

WYNYARD MONTAGU HALL

With a Foreword by

Field-Marshal Sir Cyril Deverell
G.C.B., K.B.E.

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PUTNAM · LONDON
42 GREAT RUSSELL STREET, W.C.1

First published June, 1939

Printed n Great Britain by
UNWIN BROTHERS LIMITED, LONDON AND WOKING

To
THE WOMEN
WHO FACED DEATH
FOR THE HONOUR OF
ENGLAND

Acknowledgments

THE author is indebted to Sir Charles Harper, K.B.E., C.M.G., for his contribution from *The Golden Stool of Ashanti*, published in *Blackwood's Magazine* of May 1935; to the Times Publishing Company, Ltd., for permission to reproduce the article, *Golden Stool Restored*; to Messrs. Methuen & Co. for permission to include extracts from *The Downfall of Prempeh*, by Major-General R. S. S. (now Lord) Baden-Powell, and *The Relief of Kumasi*, by Captain H. C. J. Biss; to Messrs. Sands & Co., *The Ashanti Campaign of 1900*, by Captain C. H. Armitage and Lieutenant-Colonel A. F. Montenaro; to Messrs. Wightman & Co., *To Kumassi with Scott*, by George C. Musgrave, and to the publishers of *Four Years in Ashanti*, by the Rev. G. Ramseyer.

Preface

MORE than a year ago, on November 2, 1937, I was listening to the nine o'clock wireless news, and was about to switch off on its termination, when my ears caught the words, "Queen Ashantuah."

I listened. That's the Old Terror right enough!

"A thin, brown, leathery old lady, with fierce blazing eyes —The most amazing native woman who ever lived in Africa— The cruellest woman and the greatest murderess of her age— She hated the British—A great patriot—when she surrendered to me she spat in my face."

The talk over I switched off and sat down to reflect. It brought back memories of the efforts I and my little native force made to combat the terrible revenge that Queen Ashantuah had planned, and how nearly she had succeeded.

I recalled, too, the task that fell to me of having to save the Europeans and natives besieged in Kumasi, when all hope of relieving them had been abandoned. Our poor womenfolk! It all came back to me again.

Should I let the public have the full written story? It would reveal to them what a drama it was and something so different to what they had been led to believe all these years. It would be a thousand pities if the true story of this great drama was never revealed. History must be put right. I must no longer remain silent.

Every detail came vividly back to me. Never did English ladies face death more bravely. Never did missionaries render better service. Never were British officers called upon to carry out a more hopeless task. Never was there a more wonderful ending.

I have now completed the work in narrative form, which I trust may not only be of some interest to the reader, but

also prove a permanent record of an achievement, hitherto unrecorded, which in its results has brought the greatest prosperity and happiness to Ashanti.

The despatches, orders, letters, telegrams, notes, etc., quoted, in fact every document mentioned in this book, is a copy of the original. They are quoted in full to support the material facts that have never been revealed.

In compiling this volume it was necessary, owing to my having been blinded, to have the help of my wife. A great deal of research had to be undertaken, which necessitated my having to memorize not only the material obtained and my own collection of records, but the dictated matter as I moulded it into each chapter. Accuracy was imperative. This meant for my wife much repetitive reading, and, being a faster typist than I am, she typed as I dictated each day's task, copying in where necessary the essential documents.

Neither of us have had any previous experience in literary work, so I concentrated on accuracy rather than phraseology. My readers, I feel sure, will make due allowance for any shortcomings and accept my apologies.

W. M. H.

EARLEY

April, 1939

Foreword

FORTY-FOUR years ago to-day I left England for Aden to join the 2nd Battalion the West Yorkshire Regiment, to which I had just been gazetted as a second lieutenant. After seventeen years in India the Battalion was expecting to return to England in November to be stationed at Dover, and little did we all think, when we embarked at Aden in H.M.S. *Malabar* under orders for Home, that we should be disembarked at Gibraltar to go into camp on the North Front for three weeks before going on service in West Africa. As it happened, our 1st Battalion was stationed at Gibraltar at the time, so the two Battalions met after an interval of very many years.

While at Gibraltar the 2nd Battalion was ordered to discard the Indian khaki uniform that we had worn in Aden, and we put on the red serge jackets and blue serge trousers that the Authorities at the War Office had decided were more suitable clothing for service on the Gold Coast.

Amongst the officers of the 2nd Battalion was the author of this story, then a subaltern of some five years' service. He and I were trained in the same school of military thought, and very early it was impressed upon us that it was our duty to keep our eyes and ears open and our mouths shut. A perusal of this book will show how well in very trying circumstances the author used the two above accomplishments for the benefit of his country's cause, and it is now only after nearly forty years of silence, and most sadly for him of blindness, that he has decided to place on record for historical purposes his detailed account, supported by documents, of the course of the campaign of 1900 as seen by him.

Some two years after our return from the Ashanti expedition of 1895–96 Hall had felt the call to return to West Africa, a call which had come to him alone of those in the West York-

shire Regiment who had experienced Ashanti in 1896. The commencement of the rainy season of 1900 found him back in Cape Coast Castle, confronted with as difficult a situation as comes to few men in their lifetime.

At his special request I write this foreword to his story as a friend of our subaltern days, and as the Colonel of the Regiment to which we are proud to have belonged.

I do not propose to comment on his story: that gallant and inspiring soldier General Sir James Willcocks would have best been able to do that, and he is no longer with us. To enable the reader to appreciate properly the story, I confine myself to saying that Major Hall was a quiet, unassuming soldier, with no thought of self, and devoted to duty and to the men he led and served. He makes no claim for himself as being endowed with strategical and tactical knowledge above his fellows. Confronted as he was with the dreadful consequences should Kumasi fall, and filled with the burning desire to prevent such a catastrophe, he had the character to avoid attempting the spectacular, and to adopt a sounder method of helping others to accomplish the object which was so keenly exercising the minds, not only of those in West Africa, but of the people of England.

Expeditions in Ashanti are now fortunately things of the past, but this story tells in narrative form of how, when British troops were battling to keep the flag flying in South Africa, native troops of the Empire led by British officers, were also playing their part in West Africa. The conditions existing in Kumasi to-day are a testimony to the work of the British Empire, though how great that testimony is can best be appreciated by those who, like the author and myself, saw that cruel, forbidding native town before British influence had there begun to make itself felt.

C. J. DEVERELL
Field-Marshal

Colonel the West Yorkshire Regiment
(The Prince of Wales's Own)

11th April, 1939

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THE GREAT DRAMA OF KUMASI

CHAPTER ONE

A Powder Magazine

ASHANTI! That land of dread and mystery! The Eldorado of a thousand years, with its reputed millions and millions of tons of wonderful gold ore and rivers glittering with sparkling diamonds!

It was not, however, till 1896, when Ashanti was taken under the protection of the British Government, that opportunity to exploit the Eldorado came. Gold prospecting began, companies were formed, and the wheel of fortune started turning.

The Ashanti Goldfields Corporation soon had in operation the most wonderful gold mine in the world. It simply poured out gold in quantities far beyond the dreams of avarice. Nothing in the world has been seen like it. Forty years later it is still pouring out more and more gold, and paying higher and higher dividends. Eldorado indeed!

Lucky Ashanti Goldfields! The very name quickens my pulse, not as a shareholder, for such luck never came my way, nor as a winner of its gold, but at the thought of stirring events and happy endings. Fate called on me to play no small part in those dramatic days when war, savagery, and human sacrifice reigned, and to see realized a peaceful and contented Ashanti, with a cathedral capital, honoured by an official visit from H.R.H. the Duke of Windsor when Prince of Wales.

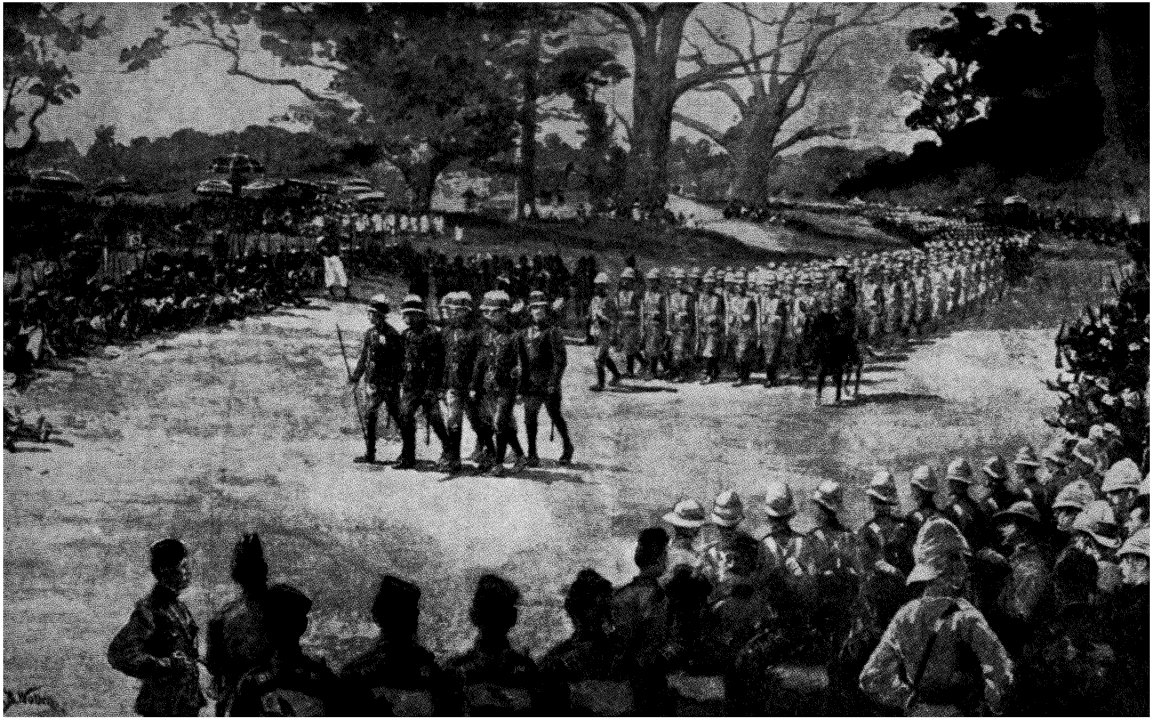
It was in 1895 when, with my regiment, I was off the island of Malta on a troopship homeward bound after a tour of service in India, Burma, and Aden that the word went round, "West Yorkshires for Ashanti!" We had just received the signal message that we were to proceed on active service

to the Gold Coast and to disembark at Gibraltar, where the other battalion of the regiment was quartered, to reorganize preparatory to the transfer to another troopship. At Gibraltar we learned that a composite battalion was being formed in England, composed of picked men from different regiments at home, including the Guards, to join us on the Gold Coast, together with Royal Artillery, Royal Engineers, and Departmental Corps. The 2nd West India Regiment and a Naval Brigade were to be there also.

We duly embarked on the transport *Manilla*, and while good wishes and handshakes were in full swing I was put in charge of two donkeys for the use of Prince Henry of Battenberg and Prince Christian, who were to join the expedition from England. On arrival at Cape Coast Castle the disembarkation of the Expeditionary Force was carried through without a hitch and the Force at once proceeded on its inland march to Kumasi, the capital of Ashanti, one hundred and forty miles from the coast.

It soon became known to most of us that the objects of this expedition were to put an end to human sacrifice, slave trading, and raiding, to secure peace and security for the neighbouring tribes, and to exact payment of the balance of the war indemnity of 1874. Every effort to secure these objects by peaceful methods had failed and the only possible solution was to appoint a Resident at Kumasi, who could see that the King of Ashanti carried out his treaty obligations. The King was asked to approve of this arrangement. At first he refused absolutely to accept a Resident. Then he sent insulting messages, and finally declined to have any more dealings with the Governor of the Gold Coast, but sent two envoys to England to interview Queen Victoria. The mission was unsuccessful and the envoys returned to the Gold Coast.

Our plan of operations was to advance through the jungle forest in one large fighting column as rapidly as possible, so as to follow up the two envoys already on their way back to Kumasi, and to ensure that our return to the transports was effected within six weeks, before the unhealthy season began. The Ashantis take time to mobilize and to get all the prelimi-



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British Troops entering Kumasi

nary fetish-eating and oath-swearing completed, and thus, before they were ready, we were already in Kumasi, close on the heels of the two envoys.

I shall never forget that entry. A miserable collection of squalid-looking mud huts, with high jungle grass between them and one open space where a motley crowd of natives were assembled, and conspicuous in their midst a very large multi-coloured State umbrella,* under which could be discerned, seated on a throne, the King of Ashanti. In silence and with sullen demeanour they watched the troops form up; then they gradually dwindled away except for the King and his attendants, while the troops were allotted to billets and the preparation of defensive measures.

In the afternoon Sir Francis Scott, the commander of the expedition, with his staff, seated in a semicircle on the open space, received a visit from King Prempeh and his chiefs. There had been some conjecture as to what the King might do when asked to come down from his throne under the umbrella to meet Sir Francis Scott. We watched him do so. He was then informed that he would have to make his submission in accordance with native forms and customs to the Governor, who would be coming to Kumasi in a day or two.

Three days later this submission took place, special precautions having been taken in the interval to ensure that the King and the Queen-Mother did not make their escape. At seven o'clock in the morning the British troops were formed up in a hollow square on the open space with the native Hausa force and Baden-Powell's scouts forming an outer ring. We awaited the arrival of the King. An hour passed and no sign of him; it was apparent that he had no intention of coming. A detachment of the Special Service Corps was sent to bring him along. In a very few minutes the King was carried forth in his State cradle with a small following, and, escorted by the troops, he proceeded hurriedly to the parade ground. The Queen-Mother, similarly escorted, followed shortly, as well as all the chiefs. They were then marshalled in a line,

* This umbrella may be seen in the Royal United Service Museum, Whitehall, London.

each with a number of attendants, in front of the Governor of the Gold Coast, who was seated on a dais, with Sir Francis Scott and Colonel Kempster. Governor Maxwell, through the medium of interpreters, announced that the King must render submission to him in accordance with the native form and custom signifying abject surrender.

The supreme moment had come. Would the King do it? All eyes were turned to the throne. The King rose and with bad enough grace walked forward, accompanied by the Queen-Mother; then bowed before the Governor and embraced his knees. It was a little thing, but it was a blow to Ashanti pride and prestige such as had never been suffered before.

In absolute silence then came a long indictment and the demand for the payment of the war indemnity of 1874. Only vague promises were forthcoming; so the King was informed by Governor Maxwell that "the King, the Queen-Mother, the King's father, his two uncles, his brother, the two war chiefs, and the Kings of Mampon, Ejissu, and Ofinsu, will be taken as prisoners to the Coast. They will be treated with due respect."

Then followed the final act, so vividly described by Major R. S. Baden-Powell* who was there too:†

"The sentence moved the Ashantis very visibly. Usually it is etiquette with them to receive all news, of whatever description, in the gravest and most unmoved indifference; but here was Prempeh bowing himself to the earth for mercy, as doubtless many and many a victim to his lust for blood had bowed in vain to him, and around him were his ministers on their feet, clamouring for delay and reconsideration of the case. The only 'man' among them was the Queen.

"In vain. Each chief found two stalwart British non-commissioned officers at his elbow, Prempeh being under charge of Inspector Donovan. Their arrest was complete."

It was indeed a moving spectacle to those of us who were present. The one thought was what would be the outcome of it.

* Lieutenant-General Lord Baden-Powell, O.M., G.C.M.G., G.C.V.O., K.C.B.

† *The Downfall of Prempeh*, by Major-General R. S. Baden-Powell (Methuen & Co.).



The Submission

No time was lost in preparing for the return of the Expeditionary Force. Every vestige of the ceremonial of human sacrifice was obliterated and the fetish buildings at Bantama were burned. Preparations were at once commenced for the construction of a powerful fort, to be furnished at first from the Expeditionary Force. The field telegraph line from the coast was to be made permanent and Captain Donald Stewart was to remain as the first Resident at Kumasi.

The Expeditionary Force started on its return journey five days after its arrival at Kumasi. Special precautions had to be taken against any possible attempt to rescue the prisoners. The royal captives were handed over to the West Yorkshire Regiment for safe conduct to Cape Coast Castle and I was told off to take charge of them for the journey.

On arrival at Cape Coast Castle I handed over the captives as they embarked on H.M.S. *Racoon* for Elmina, and with the rest of the Expeditionary Force we embarked on our respective transports for England.

After the deportation of King Prempeh no successor was appointed to the throne of Ashanti. The affairs of Kumasi were administered by a native council of three under guidance of the British Resident, while the other states of the confederacy retained their kings and tribal system, some of these kings having been released from captivity for this purpose. Though outwardly submissive, the Ashantis were far from reconciled to British rule; the war indemnity was not paid and it was believed by many that it was only a question of opportunity when trouble would again arise.

In the meantime, with the completion of a powerful fort and the maintenance of a permanent garrison, there was an influx into Kumasi of traders, prospectors, officials, and missionaries of all denominations. With this influx began the rebuilding of the town, which by 1900 was flourishing rapidly and a credit to all concerned. Then came a historical event for Kumasi. It was the announcement that His Excellency the new Governor of the Gold Coast was to pay his first official visit to Kumasi, and that he would be accompanied by his wife, Lady Hodgson. It was on March 25, 1900, while I was

helping to colonize a part of Africa, three months earlier named Northern Nigeria, that the town of Kumasi, gaily decorated, awaited the arrival of the representative of the Queen, Sir F. M. Hodgson, K.C.M.G.

Escorted by the Acting Resident and all the Europeans who had met them outside the town, and by twenty Hausas under a sergeant, the Governor and his lady moved towards the town. As they came in sight of the Fort they were greeted by the missionaries of the Basel Mission at Kumasi, who had all their school children lined up singing the National Anthem. Then the procession moved on, passing beneath the triumphal arch, and turned up the broad road leading to the Fort, on either side of which sat the Ashanti kings and chiefs, each under his ceremonial umbrella.

On reaching the Fort the Governor and his party took up their positions on the verandah to receive the salutes of the kings and their followers as they passed in procession. Among the latter, as Lady Hodgson points out in the admirable account of the affair which she has given in her book, *The Siege of Kumasi*, not the least conspicuous figures were those of the hereditary executioners, now happily shorn of their ancient glory.

All passed off without a hitch and there was no hint of any trouble impending. It was nightfall before the last of the procession had passed by and the Governor and his party were able to turn thankfully to the refreshments provided by the Acting Resident.

Three days later Sir Frederick Hodgson met the kings and chiefs in a big palaver. Captain Sir Cyril Armitage, K.C.M.G., D.S.O., who was then acting as private secretary to His Excellency, gives the following account of it:*

"On the afternoon of March 28th the Resident's interpreter was busily engaged in forming the various groups of kings and chiefs into a huge semicircle facing the marquee, which had been erected in front of the Fort for the Governor and his suite. The kings were finally arranged in their order of

* *The Ashanti Campaign of 1900*, by Captain C. H. Armitage, D.S.O., and Lieut.-Colonel A. F. Montanaro, R.A. (Sands & Co.).

precedence, supported on either side by their chiefs, while behind stood a compact mass of dusky humanity awaiting the Governor's arrival.

"At 4 p.m. the Fort bugles announced His Excellency. The guard of honour presented arms, and the Governor, dressed in full uniform, and accompanied by Lady Hodgson, took his seat and received each king in turn, shaking hands with them. The old Queen-Mother of Ejissu, Queen Ashantuah, whose name has since figured so largely in the rebellion, caused much amusement by carefully examining the Governor's medals. On the completion of this ceremony, the Governor addressed the assembly. He told them how greatly pleased he was to have at last had an opportunity of coming to Kumasi and meeting them in their own country, reminding them that although this was the first time that he had visited Ashanti, he had been in the colony for many years, when as Colonial Secretary, he had gained a knowledge of the country and the customs of its people. He then briefly reviewed England's relations with Ashanti during the past thirty years, and informed the kings that the time had now come for their people to do something towards paying off the war indemnity incurred by them in 1874. He read out a list of the sums to be paid yearly by the various Ashanti tribes as interest on the indemnity.

"This announcement was received in silence, and the Governor proceeded to ask where the Golden Stool was and why it had not been given up to him as representative of the Great White Queen. Although the Ashantis might keep the Stool, we, he said, had still the power. The kings were now asked if they had anything to say, when they expressed their pleasure at seeing the Governor in Kumasi, and told him that they were unable to pay the sums of money he had mentioned. The Governor promised to meet them again and talk the matter over with them, and proceeded to give presents, varying from £20 to £30, to the kings and the principal chiefs, after which he returned to the Fort, while the Ashantis slowly dispersed."

The Golden Stool is the symbol of Ashanti sovereignty and

represents the Ashanti power. The chief whom the Ashanti nation places on the Golden Stool is king for the time being. Every effort was therefore made to trace it, but in spite of tempting rewards the Ashantis refused to disclose its hiding-place. Information, however, came to hand of the whereabouts of the Golden Stool. It was supposed to be hidden under the floor of a hut in a small clearing in the Achima country and two days' march from Kumasi; so Captain Armitage was instructed to proceed there with Captain Leggett and a detachment of Hausas to search the villages *en route* for guns and powder, and to make an attempt to find the Golden Stool. A native boy who was to guide the party accompanied them, and on the morning of Saturday, March 31st, they started off.

CHAPTER TWO

The Three Avengers

THREE Ashantis sat looking at each other. Their eyes flashed. They were Opoku Mensah, sub-chief of Gaasi, Quami Elfilfa, chief of Atchima, and Kwoku Nenchie, linguist of Kumasi.* They had previously sworn fetish to avenge the insult and indignity their nation had suffered in having King Prempeh taken away from them without being able to lift a finger to prevent it. Now they were asked to give up the Golden Stool. "Never, never," they repeated. They had accepted the invitation of the British Government four years previously to serve as the Native Council of the Kumassis under the chairmanship of the British Resident at Kumasi. They were model councillors. They kept a blind eye on all the forbidden fetish customs, and when the young fighting men pressed for information as to when they would be required, the answer invariably was, "Patience, patience." Even the British Resident in broaching the subject of the payment of the war indemnity was tactfully informed that the time was most inopportune, yet funds were actually being collected from the Ashantis and sent down to Elmina to facilitate the return of King Prempeh. The sums involved were large and it became necessary to transfer King Prempeh from the Gold Coast to Sierra Leone for greater safety.

Each year, as the Yam festival came round (a sort of harvest festival of the Ashantis, involving human sacrifices and offerings to their gods), these avengers longed for its re-establishment. They viewed with anger the ruins of the fetish buildings at

* The two latter were afterwards sentenced to deportation for life. Opoku Mensah died during the rebellion.

Bantama, destroyed by the British troops in 1896, in which for centuries the Bantama festival was held. Here is a vivid account of the festival written by Mr. Ramseyer, the head of the Basel Mission in Kumasi, who, with his wife, was captured by the Ashantis in 1871, taken to Kumasi, and held in captivity there until released in the war of 1874.*

"The most dreadful of the Ashanti festivals, Bantama or 'death wake,' now approached. The King went early in the morning of February 5th to Bantama, where the remains of his deceased predecessors were preserved in a long building approached by a gallery and partitioned into small cells, the entrances of which were hung with silken curtains. In these apartments reposed the skeletons of the kings fastened together with gold wire and placed in richly ornamented coffins, each being surrounded by what had given him most pleasure during his life. On this occasion every skeleton was placed on a chair in his cell to receive the royal visitor, who on entering offered it food, after which a band played the favourite melodies of the departed. The poor victim selected as a sacrifice, with a knife thrust through his cheeks, was then dragged forward and slain, the King washing the skeleton with his blood. Thus was each cell visited in turn, sacrifice after sacrifice being offered till evening closed ere the dreadful round was completed. We had heard the blowing of horns and beating of drums throughout the day, and were told that nearly thirty men had been slain. These, alas! were not all, for at six o'clock the King had returned, the horn and drums again sounded, betokening that more victims were yet to fall, and far into the night the melancholy sound continued. Two blasts of the horn signified 'Death!' 'Death!'; three beats of the drum, 'Cut it off!'; and a single beat from another drum announced 'The head has dropped.' Powerless as we were, amid the fearful darkness around, to hinder such atrocities, we could only sigh and pray that our captivity might bring about a better state of things."

Nevertheless, in spite of the treaty the British Government had obtained after the war of 1874, in which among other

* *Four Years in Ashanti*, by the Rev. G. Ramseyer.



Human Sacrifice

The original of the bowl is in the Royal United Service Museum, London, presented by Lord Baden-Powell

things the King of Ashanti undertook to abolish human sacrifice, this ceremony, and many others involving some hundreds of victims each year, continued to be carried on up to the entry of the British troops into Kumasi in 1896. On this occasion the Ashantis took the precaution of removing the skeletons from the fetish buildings at Bantama a few days before our entry. A thorough search of the buildings was then made and all the cells were found empty. The skeletons were known to have been carefully hidden away, no doubt with a view to their replacement on the anticipated withdrawal of the British troops. The buildings were therefore destroyed before our departure.

In the hearts of the three avengers gazing on the ruins of the Bantama buildings welled up a bitter hatred of the British with their laws and civilization.

"Why can't we be allowed to carry on our own religion in our own way?" they doubtless asked each other. "We are not conquered yet; we have been tricked. We must have our revenge, and if the white troops come back again, it shall be white heads not black heads that the one beat of our drum shall announce have dropped."

They planned and planned. The question was, unless they got King Prempeh back, how and when an Ashanti was to be placed on the Golden Stool so as to carry out the essential part of the Bantama ceremony. The avengers concentrated on the return of King Prempeh, but when the plot was nearing fruition the British Government got wind of it and frustrated it by removing King Prempeh to Sierra Leone. A successor had therefore to be found, one who would appeal to the Ashanti nation as a whole, and in order that he might be enstooled with all the rights and ceremonies of an Ashanti king, the Golden Stool, at present hidden and in safe keeping, must be available when required, for without it there could be no king; in fact, the Golden Stool was the soul of the Ashanti nation.

The three avengers, with their followers, attended the Governor's grand palaver on March 28, 1900. They were not surprised at Sir Frederick Hodgson's demand for payment

of the war indemnity, being well aware of the persistent efforts that had already been made, but the Governor's reference to the Golden Stool was to them a danger signal. They repeated to themselves: "He wanted to know where the Golden Stool was and why it had not been given up to him as representative of the Great White Queen. We might keep the Stool but the British Government had still the power. There must be something up now; we must keep our eyes and ears open; we know only too well the efforts the British have made to find the Golden Stool."

On the 29th and 30th of March the three avengers were in close touch with His Excellency the Governor and his officials as assessors in the legal cases His Excellency had been called upon to deal with during those two days. They were not slow in gathering the information and appreciating the meaning of the sudden departure of Captain Armitage with his Hausa troops on the morning of March 31st.

That evening Quami Elfilfa and Kwoku Nenchie slipped quietly away with their followers, leaving Opoku Mensah in Kumasi where he could render more valuable assistance. A hurried meeting was held, the objects and destination of Captain Armitage's party explained, and suitable measures at once taken to deal with it.

A few days later a second meeting of rebel leaders was held to receive the report of the fighting with Captain Armitage's force and to review the situation. It was then pointed out that, although success had attended their efforts, the time was not yet opportune to raise the standard of revolt. They pointed out that King Prempeh had been removed beyond reach and that without a successor and the Golden Stool a revolt could not succeed. The meeting then decided to hold their hand for the present and to give every consideration to the selection of a suitable successor to the Ashanti Stool to lead the revolt when it did come. This successor must be one who would be approved and supported by the whole Ashanti confederation.

Such a choice was no easy matter. There was one suitable candidate, but he unfortunately was a protégé of the British

Government, who had placed him two or three years previously on the Stool of Kokofu. This was Asibi, a young man of about twenty-five, a typical Ashanti with broad, receding forehead. He was the only representative of the Ashanti Royal Family in whose veins the royal blood was known certainly to flow. This royal Ashanti was at that time, as King of Kokofu, staying with the other kings in Kumasi, and it was decided that he should be sounded on the matter and, if found willing, that preparations should be made to time the revolt to coincide with the beginning of the rainy season now approaching. It would then be impossible for the white troops to undertake military operations, even if they could be spared from the vital struggle going on in South Africa, facts only too well known to the Ashantis. The delicate task of sounding the King of Kokofu was to have been entrusted to Opoku Mensah, but on learning that he had been arrested and confined in the Fort other steps had to be taken, and it was with much trepidation that the rebel chiefs awaited the King of Kokofu's decision.

CHAPTER THREE

A Danger Signal and its Sequel

CAPTAIN ARMITAGE with his little force, after leaving Kumasi on the morning of March 31st, halted for the night at Ofinsu and next morning continued his march to Bali, where they took up their quarters for the night. On the way through the Achima country on the west side of Kumasi a village-to-village search was made for guns and powder, but beyond a few old weapons nothing was found.

On the morning of April 2nd, leaving Captain Leggett with fifteen Hausas and some carriers at Bali, Captain Armitage set off to search for the Golden Stool. Here is his own account of it:*

"The track along which we wound was scarcely discernible and led us through the deepest recesses of the forest. Even the Hausas and the usually noisy carriers were overawed by the silence. Not a leaf stirred, and our party seemed to walk as noiselessly as possible, as if afraid of disturbing some unseen foe. When the coughing bark of some large ape broke the stillness, everyone started involuntarily. For over three hours we marched silently in single file until we suddenly entered a large clearing planted with banana and plantain trees and coco, while nestling in the centre were three small huts, which had evidently not been occupied for some time.

"Here, according to our guide, under the flooring of the huts, lay the Golden Stool and Prempeh's treasure. The picks and shovels we had brought with us were at once produced, and everyone laboured amid great excitement to dig up the

* *The Ashanti Campaign of 1900*, by Captain C. H. Armitage, D.S.O., and Lieut.-Colonel A. F. Montanaro, R.A. (Sands & Co.).

floor of the largest hut—no light task, as the flooring itself consisted of hard clay, stamped down and levelled. As the diggers grew tired, others took their places, until after an hour's hard work a hole some four or five feet deep had been dug. Excitement gave way to disappointment, for there was no sign whatever of buried treasure. Indeed, the ground below the clay showed no traces of having ever been disturbed. The flooring of the other huts was dug up with no better result, and when questioned, the native informer who had accompanied us from Kumasi said that he must have made a mistake. Nothing more could be got out of him, as he was evidently half mad with fear; so very reluctantly I gave the order to fall in, and we once more entered the gloomy forest.

"Tired out and disgusted, we retraced our steps along the wretched track. A heavy fall of rain did not improve our spirits, but the sky soon cleared. We entered the main road not far from Bali at 3 p.m. and were surprised to hear a great noise proceeding from the village, as of men in violent altercation. I pushed on quickly to learn the cause, and on entering the main street was met by a gang of frightened carriers, who gasped out that 'the Ashantis live for fight.'

"I found Captain Leggett standing at the north-east corner of the village, where a broad road led to a small fetish house which stood in a cleared space about sixty yards from the village. This clearing was packed with armed Ashantis, who were dancing, howling, and hurling abuse at the stolid Hausas whom I had left behind, and who now stood at intervals facing the howling mob round the fetish house.

"Captain Leggett hurriedly informed me that a Hausa who had gone to a plantation to get food returned about 2 p.m. with news that the bush was full of armed men. This statement was soon confirmed by the appearance of the mob at the fetish house and by the noise which arose in the bush round Bali.

"The fetish priest of the village had been trying to hold back the Ashantis, who were growing more violent every minute and who were, Captain Leggett said, on the point of opening fire on him when I arrived with my party. The fetish

priest, a fantastic figure, with long matted locks hanging over his shoulders, now returned from the fetish house, and through the interpreter begged me not to fire upon the Ashantis. I replied that I had no intention of doing so as long as they kept their distance, and that I would meet their chiefs, listen to their grievances, and come to some understanding without useless bloodshed. The priest went off to bring the chiefs, and in the meantime I placed my Hausas round the village, so that it could not be suddenly rushed. Our chief danger lay in the grove of plantains which grew right up to the huts and through which the enemy could creep unobserved, and to avoid this I soon had a gang of carriers cutting down the plantains, especially those on either side of the road between the village and the fetish house.

"The fetish priest now came back and said that the chief in command of the Ashantis was at the Ofin River, one hour's march from Bali, but that he had sent messengers to him. He asked me not to cut down the plantains, and I promised to recall the carriers, who were hard at work, as soon as the Ashantis were withdrawn from the fetish house."

The answer of the Ashantis was very definite. They opened fire on the carriers and an attack developed on the village which was successfully held all night against them. Captain Armitage and Captain Leggett were both severely wounded, and Mr. Erbyn, the interpreter, and many Hausas and carriers were also wounded.

Under cover of darkness next morning this gallant little band succeeded in slipping away from the village. Throughout the night the Ashantis had continually been hurling defiance, raising their war cry, and singing a song of which the following is a rough translation:

"The Governor came up to Kumasi on a peace palaver.

"He demanded money from us and sent white men to bring him the Golden Stool.

"Instead of money the Governor shall have the white men's heads sent to him to Kumasi.

"The Golden Stool shall be well washed in the white man's blood."

There seems little doubt that had Captain Armitage discovered the Golden Stool not a man would have survived. As it was, on the return journey they were threatened and attacked, and, being hampered by the wounded, the return march was a most trying one.

His Excellency the Governor had in the meantime become acquainted with the departure from Kumasi of Kwoku Nenchie and Quami Elfilfa, and that a rebel camp was being formed outside Kumasi. He was not a little alarmed too at the report that Captain Armitage's force was to be attacked. He had Opoku Mensah, who had remained behind, brought into the Fort, there to be kept under surveillance.

It was with no little relief that His Excellency greeted the safe return of Captain Armitage and his column on April 4th. On learning all the facts he realized their gravity and significance, and at once called a meeting of the kings still in Kumasi and addressed them on the subject of what had happened. The kings protested in reply that they were ignorant that such an attack was contemplated and expressed their loyalty to the British Government.

Satisfied in some respect by these replies, Sir Frederick Hodgson could not, however, ignore the danger signals. He telegraphed to Accra for the immediate despatch to Kumasi of ammunition and food and all the available Gold Coast Hausas, and he sent runners with letters to Major Morris, D.S.O., Commissioner and Commandant of the Northern Territories, which were to the north of Ashanti and under the administration of the Gold Coast Colony, instructing him to bring such force as could be spared from the hinterland to Kumasi with the greatest despatch possible. To the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, Sir Frederick Hodgson submitted telegraphic despatches. He raised the question of sending another expedition to Ashanti. In his view the Ashantis must be settled with once for all. The position was becoming intolerable, if not dangerous. He recognized that military operations could not be undertaken during the rainy season which would soon be beginning, and

would therefore have to be postponed till October.* In the meantime he requested that the garrison of Kumasi be further strengthened by the despatch of reinforcements from Lagos and Northern Nigeria.

In Kumasi the situation appeared easier, and although the rebel chiefs were known to be active and Queen Ashantuah, who had left Kumasi, inclined to be aggressive, the Ashantis continued to keep the market well supplied with food. Sir Frederick Hodgson was kept busy attending to cases of rival claims for vacant Stools, and with his permission the Kings of Adansi, Beckwai, and N'Koranza returned to their countries. So promising was the situation considered that the Acting Resident, Captain Davidson Houston, was allowed to take his leave to England and left Kumasi with Messrs. Daw and Gordon of the Ashanti Goldfields, who had come up on a visit to Kumasi, and Mr. Wilkinson, a Government official, an escort not being considered necessary. Captain Davidson Houston's place as Acting Resident was taken by Captain Armitage.

The request of Sir Frederick Hodgson for reinforcements was approved, and it was with much satisfaction that he received notification by telegraph that the reinforcements asked for were being sent. On April 18th the first reinforcements arrived at Kumasi. They were the Gold Coast Hausas under Captain Middlemist, with Captains Marshall and Bishop and Dr. Hay. This was followed by the notification that the reinforcements from Lagos, under Captain Aplin, C.M.G., Inspector-General of the Lagos Hausas, had arrived at Cape Coast Castle on April 19th and had left again the same evening for Kumasi.

Now occurred at Kumasi a series of events which proved nothing less than the laying of the train that exploded the powder magazine. On learning of the plot to place the King of Kokofu on the Ashanti Stool to lead the rebellion, Sir Frederick Hodgson had the King's hut carefully watched, and

* In his telegram dated Kumasi, April 4, 1900, to Secretary of State, he had remarked as follows: "In any case active operations could not be carried out till after the rainy season ended."

when it became apparent he was about to leave for the rebel camp he was arrested and confined in the Fort under a guard.

His Excellency, without awaiting the arrival of Captain Aplin's command and probably considering the troops already at his disposal ample, decided to embark on military operations of a punitive nature.

The first operation was to burn the village of Karsi, three miles from Kumasi on the Cape Coast road, where it was reported that a few armed men had been seen. On the morning of April 20th, therefore, a force of one hundred Hausas under Captain Middlemist, with Captains Marshall and Leggett, marched from Kumasi, burned the village, and returned.

On April 21st a column of one hundred Hausas, under Captain Marshall, with Captain Leggett, marched to the rebel camps of Aseni and Abercoom, which were found deserted, and destroyed both of them. Neither of these two operations met with any opposition.

On April 23rd a column of one hundred and fifty Hausas, under Captain Marshall, with Captain Bishop and Dr. Hay, left Kumasi to destroy another war camp. The column was heavily attacked, forced to retire, and narrowly escaped annihilation, only succeeding in reaching Kumasi with the greatest difficulty. Their losses were: Captain Marshall, Captain Bishop, and Dr. Hay wounded, one native officer, three native N.C.O.s, and one Hausa killed, and fifty-five rank and file wounded. That night the Ashantis celebrated their success by singing and drumming round Kumasi.

The 24th of April was a day of great anxiety. Sir Frederick Hodgson again telegraphed to Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, pointing out the serious situation and requesting still more reinforcements. The reply had hardly been received when news was brought in that the telegraph line had been cut and that the Ashantis were making preparations to attack Kumasi.

Early in the morning of April 25th the Europeans and white ladies evacuated their houses and took up their quarters in the Fort, while the Hausa troops took up positions commanding the approaches to Kumasi. By noon the Ashanti attack had developed and the non-Ashanti population, to the number of

some three thousand, left their houses and with everything they could collect rushed towards the Fort, where they were allowed to take up their quarters outside, and in the open. It soon became apparent that the Hausas were being driven in and had fallen back to the cover of the guns and Maxims from the Fort, where they entrenched themselves, and by evening the Ashantis were in full possession of the rest of Kumasi, which they at once proceeded to loot.

Thus passed April 26th, 27th, and 28th. On April 29th the Ashantis made an unsuccessful attack on the Fort, and at the same time, three miles away, the final drama of Captain Aplin's command was being enacted, for on that afternoon the splendid force of Lagos Hausas, which had left Cape Coast Castle in such high spirits on April 19th, reached Kumasi, battered and weary, with every one of their officers wounded and of the 250 rank and file, several had been killed and 139 wounded. Their 7-pounder gun had been abandoned to the enemy and only 9,000 rounds of ammunition brought in out of the 80,000 they were convoying to Kumasi. This force had had a peaceful march from the coast to within five or six miles of Kumasi, where it was attacked by the Ashantis and only saved from annihilation by the gallantry of the British officers who, in most cases wounded, again and again rallied and led their men against the enemy. These officers were: Captain J. Aplin, C.M.G., Inspector-General Lagos Constabulary, Captain E. C. Cochrane, Captain Read, Lieutenant J. C. Ralph, and Dr. Macfarlane.

Within two days every road leading out of Kumasi was stockaded and guarded by the Ashantis. The siege of Kumasi had begun.

After the terrible ordeal of April 29th, and realizing how grave the situation was, Sir Frederick Hodgson and his officers reviewed the situation. Their thoughts turned to reinforcements. These should be the Gold Coast Constabulary from the Northern Territories and the contingent of the West African Frontier Force from Northern Nigeria, to the latter of which a warning letter was despatched on April 30th; but what would the larger reinforcements called for consist of?



The Europeans in the Fort

They knew that on the west coast of Africa there were in Northern Nigeria two battalions of infantry and two batteries of artillery. In Southern Nigeria there was a military force on the lines of the Lagos Hausas, and at Sierra Leone two battalions of the Regular army, the 3rd West India Regiment and 1st West African Regiment, in addition to the Sierra Leone Frontier Police, a military organization.

Those in Kumasi had not the slightest doubt that these troops would be rushed to the rescue, but after all, they reasoned, "These are black troops, and will they do any better than we have done?" They knew only too well that every authority, both civil and military, had reported that black troops led by British officers could not be expected to stand up against the Ashantis. The bitter experience of the last hundred years had proved that, and the fighting of the last few days had confirmed it. The use of white troops at this period, the beginning of the rainy season, was quite out of the question, and out of it all a scheme was evolved, to be at once put into operation. This was to leave a garrison of a hundred Hausas with three British officers in the Fort, and with the remainder of the troops, the Europeans, and civil population make a dash for the Coast. The scheme was formerly submitted to a conference of officers and Government officials, presided over by Sir Frederick Hodgson, and after a discussion on its chances of success the plan was rejected, no one voting in favour of it.

The Acting Resident, a few days later, came forward with a scheme to localize the rebellion and play for time. It was to open peace negotiations with the rebel chiefs and, having obtained the approval of Sir Frederick Hodgson, use the loyal kings still in Kumasi as intermediaries. They sent messengers to the rebel chiefs with a message to the effect that the loyal kings begged the rebels to lay down their arms in order to save their country from being overrun and laid waste by the soldiers who, sooner or later, were bound to come from the Coast. They were also to say that the Acting Resident would meet them in palaver and lay their grievances before the Governor. The messengers returned with the reply that the

rebel chiefs wished the kings to come to their camp and talk matters over, adding that their present demands were those already known to the loyal King of Mampon, but if the kings would attend they would call a meeting of all the rebel chiefs to formulate their new demands and place them before the kings. The original demands were:

(1) Slavery to be allowed.
(2) All Coast traders and civilian Hausas to leave the country.
(3) The white men to return to the Coast and not trouble the Ashantis further.
(4) The Fort to be destroyed.

The new demands included the surrender of the Governor.

Thus stood matters on the evening of May 7, 1900. It was to the Expeditionary Force that those in Kumasi now looked for their salvation. They were hopelessly besieged by thousands and thousands of Ashantis.

CHAPTER FOUR

Off to Ashanti

"A DEPUTATION of twins are coming along, sir," was the announcement that greeted me as I was having my breakfast.

I ordered the table and chairs to be taken out and the deputation formed up, and hastily finishing our breakfast I and my mess companions seated ourselves facing the deputation, which had begun to form up in a single line on the farther side of the parade ground.

The native deputation seemed never ending. As our eyes turned towards the high mud walls of the town of Illorin, in Northern Nigeria, they were seen still emerging from the strikingly massive towered gateway. Each woman—for they were women only—was seen to be carrying flowers, and as they reached their places they sat down facing us, when it was noticed that from under each armpit a little black face was protruding.

When all were in position the long line rose and, advancing a short distance, the women prostrated themselves on their hands and knees, bowing their heads to the ground three times. It was a truly impressive sight, this long line of native women with their coloured draperies and their offerings of flowers, all standing out in the brilliant sunshine, silhouetted against the massive walls of the town behind. These women had come to express their gratitude for the removal of the indignities they had so long suffered as mothers of twins. I was in some measure the means of ameliorating their lot in my capacity as civil and military administrator of the province and town of Illorin.

The ceremony was abruptly closed by the receipt of a

telegram instructing me to take command of two companies 1st W.A.F.F. with two maxims and R.A. native detachment with one 75-mm. gun, and to proceed by forced marches to Lagos for service in Ashanti.

The two companies were D and E, composed of Yorubas and Nupes, natives of West Africa. The Yoruba company was commanded by Captain W. D. Beamish, Royal Munster Fusiliers, with Colour-Sergeant J. Mackenzie,* D.C.M., Seaforth Highlanders, and the Nupe company by Captain M. Wilson, Royal Irish Fusiliers, with Colour-Sergeant Humphries, Royal Welch Fusiliers. Sergeant Griggs, Royal Artillery, was in charge of the gun, and Staff-Sergeant Payne, R.A.M.C., in charge of medical arrangements.

The greater part of this force left Jebba on the River Niger on April 20, 1900, via Illorin, and the whole reached Lagos, a distance of some three hundred miles, on May 2nd. The Europeans were mounted on ponies and transport was by means of native carriers, each carrying a maximum load of 60 lb. on his head. The 75-mm. gun and the two maxims had to be transported on the heads of their own specially trained and enlisted native carriers and were designed and constructed for this purpose, provision being made for rapid mounting and dismounting. In the case of the 75-mm. gun, however, the main parts had to be slung on poles fitted with crosspieces, so as to distribute the weight equally on the heads of four men. The progress of the column was therefore limited to the pace of the gun, and as long marches had to be covered it meant a long and tedious journey for all concerned.

At the port of Lagos we learned that Captain J. Aplin, C.M.G., Inspector-General of the Lagos Constabulary, had left with his command for Cape Coast Castle on April 16th, leaving again on April 19th for Kumasi with 80,000 rounds of ammunition for the garrison there.

On May 5th we embarked on s.s. *Dodo* for the Gold Coast, our written instructions being to proceed to Cape Coast Castle and thence to Kumasi with all diligence, and on arrival there to report to His Excellency the Governor.

* Gained the V.C. two months later.

We anchored off Cape Coast Castle on the evening of May 8th, where arrangements were made to commence disembarkation at dawn. It was blowing hard with a clear atmosphere. The lights in the houses along the shore front, dominated by those of the Castle, stood out clearly, and the incessant roar of the Atlantic rollers breaking on the shore was not only a reminder of a possible ducking in a surf-boat next morning, but also of the unpleasant roll of our ship at anchor which we were experiencing.

Ashanti, our destination, formed the hinterland of the Gold Coast Colony, and its boundary was the River Prah, seventy miles due north of Cape Coast Castle. Eight miles to the west of Cape Coast Castle along the coast was Elmina and its castle; nine miles to the east was Anamabo with its castle too; while Accra, seventy-one miles farther east along the coast, was the capital of the Gold Coast Colony. The country at that time could best be described as one huge forest of tropical trees and vegetation, interspersed by many rivers and a range of hills. The farther one penetrated northward the denser the jungle forest became. The towns and villages were simply clearings made in the dense forest, with what cultivation there was immediately around them. Communication was by means of bush paths, and transport was confined to native carriers.

The unhealthiness of the country was proverbial; it was universally known as the White Man's Grave. Its long rainy season, malaria-infected swamps, and a dry season anything but healthy, had given the country this bad reputation. It was for this reason that military operations in the past had only been carried out between December and February; but there we were, at the beginning of May, with the rainy season coming on, ordered to march to Kumasi with a prospect of military operations before us as rumour would have it.

My own experience of the fighting value of the Ashantis was nil, for we never fired a shot on Sir Francis Scott's expedition. Fortunately there were several books on Ashanti on board, which I studied for the rest of the evening. One authority told me that of all the many races of first-class

fighting men in the African continent, the Ashantis of the Gold Coast had offered the most continuous and courageous resistance to the British power.

I found out, too, that as far back as 1807 the Ashantis had threatened the coast towns. British troops were landed to occupy one of the coast forts, and succeeded in repelling their attacks, but for reasons of health the British troops could not be maintained there; so in order to secure peace and keep on peaceful terms with the Ashantis, the British traders made substantial payments to them.

Ten years later the Ashantis consented to the British traders controlling the natives in the coast towns, and four years afterwards these towns and forts were taken over by the British Government. Officials were sent to administer them, and it was not long before the natives in these places appreciated the advantages of British law and justice, with the result that the Fantis, living outside the towns, who had constantly to meet the demands of the Ashantis for slaves for human sacrifice, requested the British Government to take them under their protection too.

This meant the provision of a defensive force. The British Government decided to raise a local force under British officers somewhat on the lines of the troops on board the s.s. *Dodo*. The command was given to Brigadier-General McCarthy, who was also appointed Governor of the Gold Coast. Within three years of this force being raised it was called upon to resist an Ashanti invasion with most disastrous results, for within the space of a few hours, on the 21st of January, 1824, the whole force was wiped out and every British officer killed, including Brigadier-General McCarthy. The Ashantis then attacked and looted Accra, and it was only with great difficulty that the British held the coast forts.

The position became intolerable, the Ashantis being free to do what they liked, so that two years later, in 1826, the British Government determined to abandon the Gold Coast and sent instructions for the forts to be destroyed and the Europeans brought home. Fortunately for us the British traders strongly opposed it and eventually succeeded in

inducing the Government, in September 1828, to hand the forts over to them and to grant a subsidy of £4,000 a year, the Government to be relieved of all liability in the future.

The British traders continued thus until 1847 when the Colonial Office decided to assume control once more. The Ashantis again assumed their dominating tactics and the British Government decided again to raise native forces under British officers and when fully trained to stiffen them with two battalions of the West India Regiment for no less an ambitious scheme than to enter Kumasi and dictate terms there. This expedition was a ghastly failure. It never got beyond the Prah, the two battalions of the West India Regiment remaining in garrison there, a large proportion dying, while the remnants returned to Cape Coast Castle leaving the Ashantis more dominant than ever.

For over twenty years they continued to control everything except the coast forts. In 1872 the British Government, by purchase from the Dutch, obtained possession of the coast town of Elmina and its fort. The Ashantis put forward a claim for it and if not recognized would attack Elmina. A hundred and twenty men of the Royal Marines under Colonel Festin, with Lieutenant Wells, were thereupon landed at Elmina, and on June 12, 1873, successfully defeated a daring Ashanti attack on the fort. And all through the fatal fever season they held the old Dutch fort. But at what cost! twenty-seven died and every man of the rest was invalided within the hundred days.

The British Government this time determined to act vigorously. That September Field-Marshal Viscount Wolseley, then Major-General, was sent out as administrator, with instructions to raise local forces on a large scale to deal with the Ashantis. He was accompanied by a number of Special Service officers including Field-Marshal Sir Evelyn Wood, then Lieutenant-Colonel, and General Sir Redvers Buller, then Captain.

On the arrival of Viscount Wolseley on the Gold Coast on October 2, 1873, King Kofi, the Ashanti king, formulated new demands for recognition of his sovereignty, not only over

Elmina but over other territory which we had regarded as our sphere of influence. With these demands Viscount Wolseley could not comply, but the question was how to oppose them. He, with his splendid record of war service behind him, came to the conclusion that to rely on native troops, however well trained, under British officers was not good enough, and so insisted on being provided with a British brigade.

"At your own risk," said the Government. "Be it so," was Wolseley's answer. This responsibility meant not only the fighting risks against the Ashantis but also the health risk, and the problem Viscount Wolseley had to face was that within the healthy season of two months he must march 141 miles to Kumasi, conquer the Ashantis, march back again, and ship his white troops off home. He did it, defeated the Ashantis in battle at Amoaful, entered and burned Kumasi, and obtained a peace treaty with the Ashantis. His casualties in fighting were very heavy, but by disease greater, for at the end of the campaign of eight weeks the British brigade, consisting of the 23rd Fusiliers, the 42nd Highlanders, the 2nd Rifle Brigade, with R.A. and R.E., a total strength of 2,400, had 71 per cent on the sick list, forty officers had died of disease, and six of wounds. The numbers of the rank and file that died were not disclosed, and in addition there were those of the naval brigade who accompanied the force. How did the Ashantis take it? They promptly deposed their King, who had made this treaty, refused to carry out its terms, continued to raid and practise human sacrifice, and as time went on became more defiant than ever.

For twenty-one years the British Government had to put up with it. The position became intolerable and Sir Francis Scott's expedition of 1896 resulted. On that expedition the seven hundred Gold Coast and Lagos Constabulary under their own British officers and the eight hundred Baden-Powell's scouts were stiffened by a British force including a naval brigade. There was no fighting, but the presence of the white troops and the unpreparedness of the Ashantis contributed to that happy result. Military experts who were present were

unanimous that had the force been composed of native troops and West Indians, however numerous and well trained, there was little doubt that bloodshed and very probably disaster would have resulted. This was in accordance with past experience.

These facts gave me food for serious reflection. There was I, in command of native troops on board s.s. *Dodo*, ordered to Kumasi to join other native troops there, faced with a possibility of a rising at a time when white troops would not be permitted to land on the Gold Coast even if they could be spared from the South African War.

I stopped reading, replaced the books, and introduced myself to a new passenger who had come aboard that evening. He told me that he did not believe the Ashantis would rise, they were making too much money in the gold boom then going on, exorbitant sums were being paid to them for options, but he thought it was a wise precaution to send more troops to Kumasi. Then with emphasis:

"Why black troops? Surely you know that black troops cannot stand up against the Ashantis. It has been proved over and over again."

He glanced at my war ribbons and continued: "You have been to Kumasi; you will find the splendid path your force made to Kumasi overgrown and neglected and the bridge that was built over the Prah washed away and replaced by a boat ferry."

I turned in to my bunk that night anything but happy at the prospect before me. I could only hope that the whole affair would blow over and bring about our speedy return to more congenial work in Northern Nigeria.

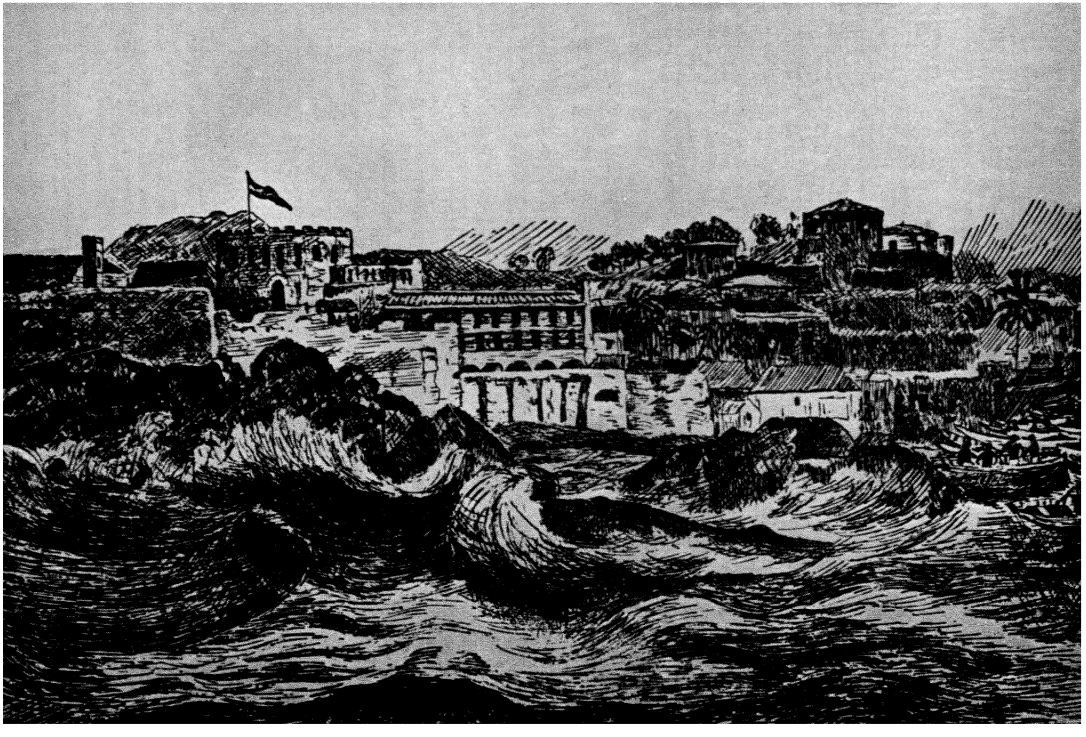
I was awakened next morning by the sound of hatches being lifted and derricks and winches moving. Outside, below me, came a hum of strange voices and sounds. I put my head out of the porthole. Surf-boats, tossing about like corks below me, awaiting their turn to come alongside. Each boat was manned by ten natives with a native coxswain. They were sitting on the gunwale five a side, clothed almost as nature made them, holding trident-shaped paddles across their knees.

I turned my head towards the shore. There was the Castle in all its glory, the palm trees and houses.

How well I remembered it all. I could see the solid rock on which stood the Castle, consisting of battlements and turrets, with the main building and tower in the centre, the Atlantic waves rising in crested walls of water as they broke on the rock at the base. Low hills surrounded the town, while the white walls of the fort gleamed from the heights beyond. The little whitewashed church and mission houses on the sea front and the substantial houses of the traders formed a strong contrast to the native quarter, where the mass of square, flat-roofed houses of red clay stood perched in every conceivable position beyond. Behind the town, and extending right to the water's edge on either side of it, rose green masses of luxuriant vegetation, forming a ridge of dense African forest, stretching away in the direction of Kumasi.

After breakfast, when the disembarkation had almost been completed and the surf boat with my orderly, native servant, and baggage was waiting alongside, I bade farewell to the Captain and officers of the ship and walked down the gangway. It was thrilling seeing the surf boat sliding up and down the pole attached to the outside of the gangway as the ship rolled. I had to judge when the gunwale of the surf boat would be level with the bottom step of the gangway on its upward rise from the sea, dash down on it, and jump before being submerged. This successfully accomplished, the surf boat moved off, the natives using their paddles and keeping wonderful time, singing a weird chant the while and sometimes pausing on their paddles for thirty seconds, while the leader of the choir gave a short solo; then they plunged in their paddles and joined in the chorus.

As soon as we neared the shore the fun began. I could see a group of officers high on the beach watching us. They had evidently come to meet me. The boat began to come in on the top of a roller, rose high in the air, the paddlers shouting excitedly, and the boat suddenly grounded almost sweeping me off my seat and before I had time to realize what had happened, two of the boatmen had lifted me and carried me



Cape Coast Castle

through the surf, landing me at the feet of the group of officers who introduced themselves as Captains Anderson, Elgee, Haslewood, Crean, and Dr. Barker.

After greeting them I told Captain Anderson that my orders from the Colonial Secretary at Accra were to proceed with my command to Kumasi and report myself to the Governor. He replied that those had been his orders, too, but the whole situation was now changed. Kumasi was besieged by 40,000* Ashantis and an Expeditionary Force had been ordered to the Coast. What it consisted of he had no idea, neither did he know who was to be in supreme command, but he understood that no more troops could arrive for three weeks. Further questioning elicited that I was the senior officer at Cape Coast Castle. I requested Captain Haslewood, the senior officer of the Gold Coast Constabulary, to accompany me to the office in the Castle and place the exact state of affairs before me.

Matters were indeed serious. Kumasi, with its non-Ashanti population of some four thousand, was closely invested and cut off from all communication with the outside world. Among the Europeans were the Governor, his wife, and several other ladies. Severe fighting had taken place and the last to enter Kumasi was a detachment of the Lagos Constabulary under the command of Captain J. Aplin, C.M.G., at the end of April, which it was estimated brought the strength of the garrison to fifteen officers and 520 native ranks. A column under Major Morris, D.S.O., with six officers and 300 native ranks with one 7-pounder, was expected to reach there from the Northern Territories in the next few days, but grave fears were now entertained as to their safety.

I sat thinking out my course of action. If precedent was to be followed we should have to remain at Cape Coast Castle until the whole of the Expeditionary Force had landed and then proceed northward in one fighting column. I told Captain Haslewood this and asked him if there was any risk of Kumasi being captured by the Ashantis.

"Certainly not the Fort, but I think I ought to tell you a piece of confidential information regarding the food supply

* The number given in official despatches published in the *London Gazette*.

in Kumasi. I regret to say it has been allowed to get very low and it is extremely doubtful if the supply will last much more than a fortnight; the danger is starvation."

That settled it. I saw at once that the Expeditionary Force must be too late. It rested with me to act and promptly too. There was nothing for it but to face the Ashantis with the 389 soldiers I had at Cape Coast Castle and attempt to hold out a helping hand to Kumasi. I told Capt. Haslewood this. He seemed surprised and warned me of the great risk I was taking, and at my request consented to accompany me as my staff officer.

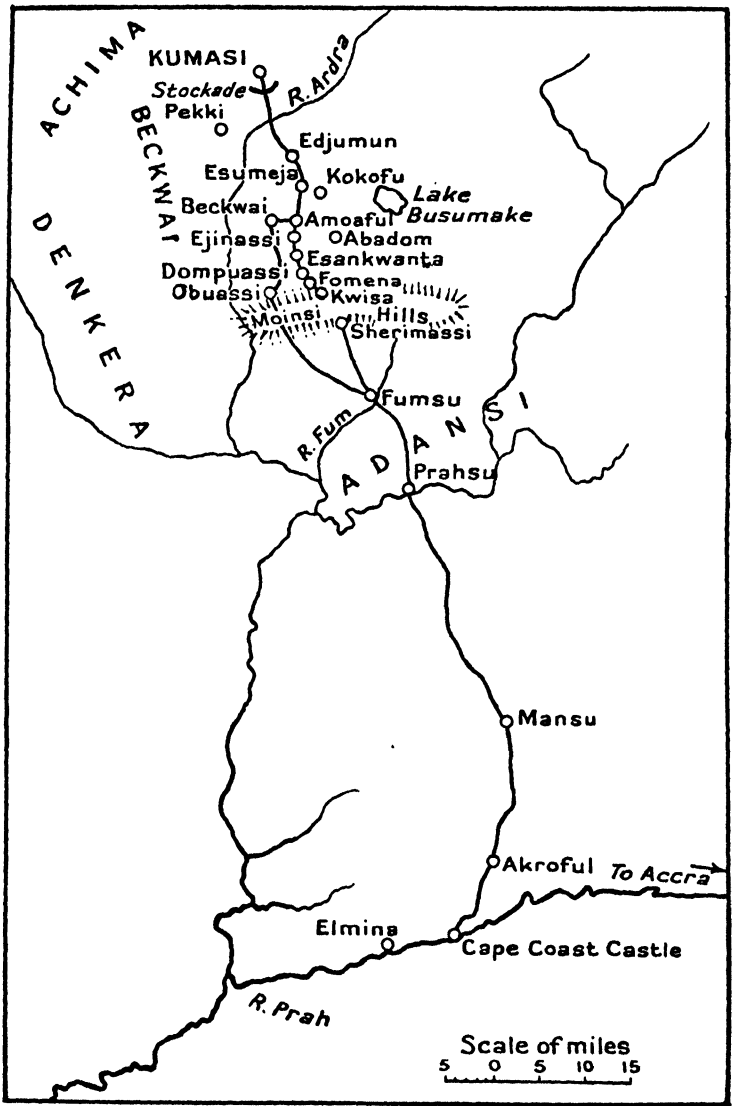
In the courtyard below I noticed Captain Crean, the local transport officer, checking loads. I called him.

"Look here, Crean," I said, "we have got to deal with a very awkward situation. I understand that you have here a large supply of food and ammunition for Kumasi which the Governor has been calling for. We must get it up at once."

"It cannot be done, sir," he replied. "You would never get thè carriers to take it. I had a certain number available but the contractor tells me that they are trying to back out of their contracts. Do you blame them under the circumstances?"

"No," I agreed, "but we must do something; you must insist on the contracts being fulfilled. Let the others take on to Prahsu only; we must get everything there. Please see to this matter at once. I mean to make a start to-day."

How well I knew this carrier problem. In the Gold Coast and Ashanti, with only bush path communications through the dense jungle forest, native carriers were the only means of transport. In peace time this was trying enough, but under fighting conditions it was a positive torture. The unfortunate carriers would be marching in single file, with their loads on their heads, often in torrential rain, farther and farther into the thick jungle forest, at one time jammed close up owing to an obstruction, at another time running to fill up an interval, always faced with the dread of being shot at or seized by hidden Ashantis for the inevitable human sacrifice which they well knew would be their lot if captured—a form of torture to the death, the details of which every carrier knew.



Sifton, Praed, & Co., Ltd., London, S.W.1.

I opened up my map of Ashanti to formulate my course of action. I remembered well the route to Kumasi. That great strategical spot, Kwisa, on the top of the Moinsi hills and only thirty-two miles from Kumasi must be my objective. If we could only get there we might be able to help. Could I frighten the Ashantis to let us get there? I decided to magnify ourselves into the Expeditionary Force and try our luck.

I told Captain Haslewood my plans and the detailed movements I wished to have carried out. They were duly entered in a new Order Book, on receiving satisfactory promises that the carriers would be forthcoming after all.

Then and there I took up a pen to start writing a report to the Colonial Secretary at Accra of what I proposed to do. I asked Haslewood if he could tell me whether the Colonial Secretary knew about the terrible tragedy of the food question in Kumasi.

"I don't think he does, sir," was the reply. "It would not do to put it in writing as the information might leak out. There is quite enough panic already."

"All right," I said, "I won't mention it," and started writing:

From Captain W. M. Hall, 2nd West Yorkshire Regiment (W.A.F.F.).
To the Colonial Secretary, Accra.

May 9, 1900.

SIR,

I have the honour to report for your information the steps I have taken to form the Relief Column for Kumasi in accordance with your letter 2997/1900 dated May 3rd.

On arrival at Cape Coast Castle to-day with Det. W.A.F.F. from Jebba I found a great accumulation of ammunition, food, etc., which was urgently required at Kumasi.

The troops at my disposal were:

Officers	*B. N.C.O.s*	*R. and F.*	*Corps*
2	—	90	Lagos
2	—	27	Gold Coast
2	4	272	W.A.F.F.
2	—	—	Medical

Total: 8 officers, 4 British N.C.O.s, and 389 R. and F., with one 75-mm. gun and 2 maxims.

For the movement of this force and the large accumulation of stores, 1,250 carriers were required, and the safe conduct of so large a convoy, and the difficulty of procuring carriers to proceed beyond the Prah, necessitated my advancing by stages.

I am also guided in this step for the following reasons:

(*a*) The greatest number of carriers that can be obtained daily is two hundred and fifty.

(*b*) The advisability of securing Prahsu and Kwisa as bases with a view of pushing on as close as possible to Kumasi, so as to enable, in the event of the garrison of Kumasi being hard pressed, for a compact force to be despatched or for the garrison to fall back upon.

(*c*) By the occupation of Kwisa any rising on the part of the Adansis will be frustrated, and I am led to believe that every assistance may be expected from the King of Beckwai.

(*d*) By the confidence given to the carriers, who can only be obtained to proceed beyond the Prah with the greatest difficulty, and also to the increased facilities given thereby for getting up further supplies.

(*e*) By the daily despatch of troops which would, in the native mind, lead to a very exaggerated number now marching to Kumasi.

I have therefore in accordance with the above ordered the following moves:

2 officers 90 as escort for convoy proceeding to-day to Prahsu.
1 company W.A.F.F. with maxim, ditto, May 10th.
½ company W.A.F.F. with 1·75-mm., ditto, May 11th.
½ company W.A.F.F. with 1 maxim, ditto, May 12th.

I am myself proceeding to Prahsu on May 11th, and I hope to concentrate at Prahsu on May 15th and Kwisa on May 17th.

In conclusion I trust that the steps I have taken may meet with your approval, and that the pressing state of affairs decided me on acting on my own responsibility, on finding myself the senior officer on my arrival at Cape Coast Castle.

I would add that a copy of this letter will be left at Cape Coast Castle, and a similar copy given to the Officer Commanding Gold Coast on his arrival.

I have the honour to be, Sir,
Your obedient servant,
W. Montagu Hall,
Captain, 2nd West Yorkshire Regiment.

CHAPTER FIVE

A Momentous Bluff

THE courtyard of the Castle presented a very animated scene. The rain had temporarily stopped, the tarpaulins were removed from some of the stacks, and Captain Crean was very busy superintending the handing over of loads, of an average weight of 60 lb., to each carrier, who was assisted to place it on his head and moved to his allotted position in the long line which was being formed with native troops interspersed amongst them. In another part of the courtyard were a number of hammock men with their hammocks and a gang of carriers standing by their loads. Dr. Barker was carefully checking everything. He was satisfying himself that his medical unit had left nothing behind. Outside the Castle was drawn up E Company under Captain Wilson, ready to take up its allotted position in the column; Captain Anderson had his advance and rearguards of Lagos Hausas already in position, and Captain Elgee was moving about with a watchful eye to see that none of the loaded carriers moved from his allotted position.

D Company, under Captain Beamish, with the 75-mm. gun, were by that time three miles along the Prahsu road carrying out a feint advance. A Gold Coast native soldier had been sent with them to show them the way, guide them across country, and bring them back by the Accra road so that they might be taken for troops coming from Accra. Another Gold Coast soldier had been allotted to E Company for the same purpose, and Captain Wilson was instructed not to return till after dark.

Everything being ready, I gave the signal to move off. There

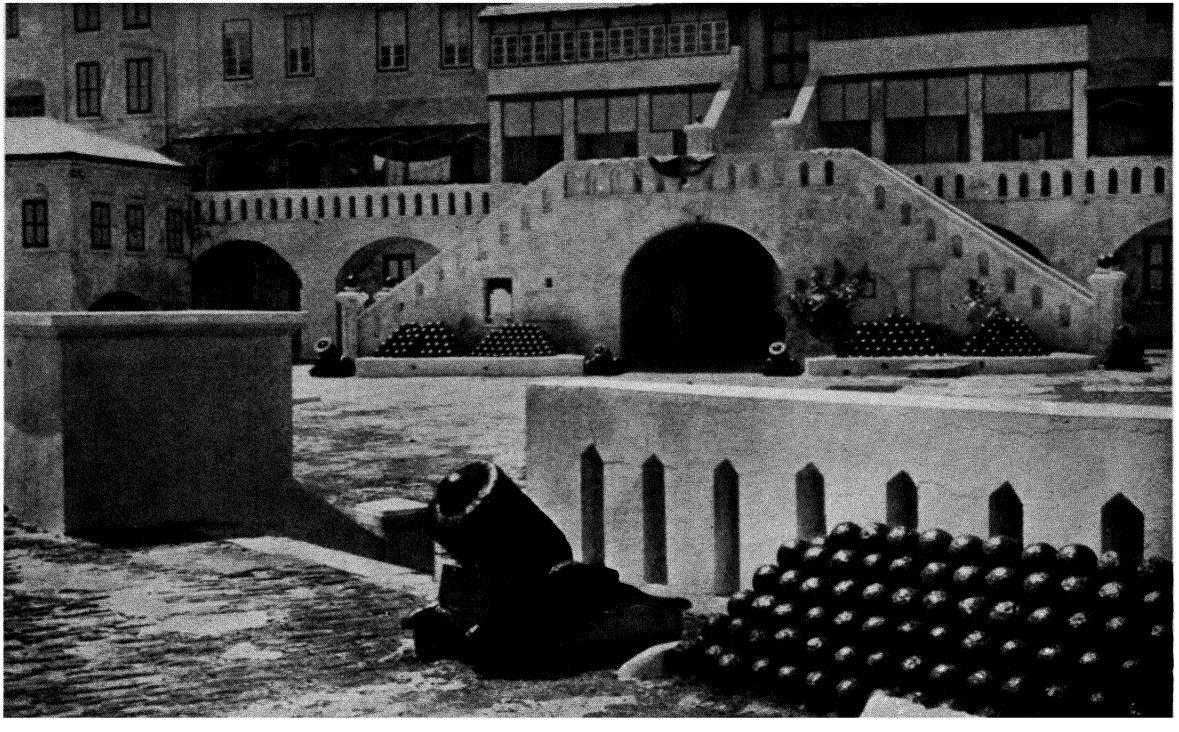


Photo : P. B. Redmayne

The Courtyard of Cape Coast Castle

was a succession of bugle calls, loads were lifted and perched on heads, and the column moved off. Captain Haslewood and I went on to the ramparts to see them fading away in the distance. The column was quite a mile long and with bugles sounding and the local populace in full force the scene was one not easily to be forgotten.

Returning to the courtyard I noticed a figure approaching. I recognized Inspector Donovan, whom I last saw at Kumasi carrying out the dramatic arrest of King Prempeh. He was a typical Irishman.

"Hullo, Donovan, where have you sprung from?" I asked.

"I have come to find you, sir. I hear you are going to take the Ashantis on with your mighty army and I want to be in the fun, so will you take me in any capacity? I can easily arrange for another to carry on with my police here."

Captain Crean then joined us. He wanted to be taken on too. He explained that the detachments of Gold Coast native soldiers under his command at Cape Coast Castle and Elmina might be replaced by bluejackets and marines landed from H.M.S. *Magpie*. I pointed out to him that he was rendering as local transport officer very valuable service and, with the arrival of the Expeditionary Force, for which a very large number of carriers would be required, his services would be indispensable. Captain Crean then suggested that I should wire to Captain Slater at Accra to come and take his place, as the latter had more experience than he had.

The spontaneous offer to share the terrible risks was magnificent. I told them both that I was going to the telegraph office to report our arrival to the Colonial Secretary at Accra and my intention to push on at once, so I would do my best with him to allow them both to come.

That done, I went into the question of organizing a native Intelligence. I attached the greatest importance to this. The Ashantis were past masters in this work and we must be a good second. They had their ramifications everywhere in the Gold Coast and Ashanti. I therefore instructed Captain Haslewood to set about with the greatest caution to try and get

hold of a native who could be vouched for and knew Ashanti well, or, better still, an Ashanti-born native.

That afternoon, when the sun had disappeared below the horizon and lamps had begun to make their appearance, I joined a group of seated officers discussing anything but shop over a friendly cocktail. I was then handed a telegram. I opened it and read:

To the Officer Commanding Cape Coast Castle.
From the Colonial Secretary, Accra.

May 9, 1900.

Note your arrival Donovan cannot be spared Captain Slater will meet you at Prahsu do not think it advisable to remove detachments at present from Cape Coast and Elmina.

I handed this telegram to Captain Crean who read it, looked disappointed, and without a word handed it back. I then whispered to Captain Haslewood:

"Put this in an envelope and have it sent to Donovan to be returned. I don't wish to hand it to him personally as I had better not hear his Irish."

I was up and about at dawn next morning. Native soldiers were standing about in groups under any shelter they could obtain. It was cold, clammy, and raining. Everybody was waiting for the arrival of the carriers. One by one they came straggling into the courtyard of the Castle, then fewer and fewer and finally ceased. They were mustered and counted; only eighty out of the promised two hundred and fifty. The transport officer looked glum. Frantic messages, but all in vain. Captain Crean gave us one ray of hope; one hundred and seventy were promised by midday. The fall-in was sounded, the eighty carriers loaded up, one section of E Company was told off as escort, and headed by D Company, which was instructed to return by midday in scattered parties and disguised, the second column for Prahsu started off.

The process was repeated at midday. By frantic efforts the one hundred and seventy carriers were collected by 2 p.m. when the third column for Prahsu was got going. This time Captain Wilson, with three sections of E Company, was in

command, accompanied by Colour-Sergeant Humphries, D Company again going out to swell the numbers. The 75-mm. gun was also sent out with the column. This was the second occasion on which a 75-mm. gun had been wheeled out of its godown in the Castle to be manhandled by its native detachment and drawn through the streets of Cape Coast Castle with the column it accompanied.

Later in the afternoon I made a call at the telegraph office for information regarding the situation in Ashanti which I had previously requested should be furnished me. There I learned that the telegraph operator at Prahsu had telegraphed that the Adansis had thrown in their lot with the Ashantis. They had held a great gathering at Pategorah where the big fetish was kept, also at Fomena, the capital of Adansi, and the Adansi chief threatened to swear fetish on all who would not join them. This was indeed serious news, for it meant that we should be opposed the moment we crossed the Prah. This was a bitter blow, as I had hoped by a rapid advance, as stated in my letter to the Colonial Secretary, to have frustrated this rising of the Adansis.

I broke the news to Captain Haslewood. He was not surprised. He cheerfully told me that he had found the very man I wanted for the intelligence work. He had been an Ashanti slave and had been given a sort of education in one of the missionary schools. I proceeded to interview the man.

"You speak English?" I asked.

"Yaas, sah; can read and write it a little. Me speak all Ashanti languages, me know Ashanti well."

"Do you want the Ashantis to be big again?"

"God forbid. Shanti sacrifice navar navar!"

This was good enough, so I told the native that I wanted him to help us save Kumasi from the very thing he dreaded most. He was to find out and keep me informed of every move of the Ashantis. He was to let nobody know what he was doing and to conceal his identity he was the White Captain's head carrier. He would have my valise and bedding to carry and he was to select a friend he could trust as his assistant and to carry my chop box. Both would receive the

usual rates of pay. The man agreed and I instructed him to turn up at the Castle with his assistant at dawn next morning, ready to proceed to Prahsu with my kit.

I rose early, packed everything, and, as the fall-in sounded, entered the courtyard. D Company had fallen in, but I could see no sign of any carriers. I questioned Captain Haslewood. He informed me that the only two who had turned up were my own. He had already spoken to Captain Crean, who apparently was very upset and had gone off to see what could be done. I beckoned to my head carrier. He came over.

"Look here, do you know why the other carriers haven't turned up?"

"Well, sah. I don't want to say too much, but things are bad up there and men don't want to go."

"You mean frightened?"

The man nodded.

"What are they frightened about?"

"The news bad news, sah; they say white officers and Hausas all killed near Kumasi."

"Nonsense, the Ashantis cannot capture the Fort where the white officers and Hausas are. Tell everyone it is not——"

I felt a touch on my arm and heard Captain Haslewood whisper, "I can see what he means, I will tell you later."

As we moved away, he told me:

"A terrible business, sir; Major Morris, six officers, and three hundred Hausas is probably the number. We heard that they had been sent for to come to Kumasi from the Northern Territories and our fears have now been realized."

I asked him not to mention it to Beamish and Crean, who were coming towards us.

I was watching them as they approached. I could see Captain Crean looked upset and caught the words, "That damned Accra press is frightening the life out of the carriers."

"What's that you're saying, Crean?" I asked.

"The Accra papers print bad news, sir; they say the expedition is postponed till October."

"Don't believe it, but when are we going to have the carriers?"

"I am afraid it's hopeless, sir, unless you can do something."

I dismissed the parade and filled in the time thinking of ways and means of obtaining carriers. I thought of Inspector Donovan and wrote him the following memo, addressing it to his rank at the time, Sub-Assistant Commissioner.

Cape Coast Castle,
May 11, 1900.

As great difficulty is experienced in getting carriers for the Kumasi Relief Column, even to proceed as far as Prahsu only, I should be much obliged if you would kindly use your influence in collecting some of the able-bodied natives to be observed in the town.

I would not have appealed to you but for the absolute necessity of my having carriers, and I think that if you saw some of the head men I am confident that many will come.

W. MONTAGU HALL,
Captain.

I followed this up with an interview with the chief who was under a yearly contract to supply Government requirements of carriers. He was very definite. The situation in Ashanti was so serious that carriers would not go there. He had done his very best. I then pressed for carriers only as far as Prahsu, undertaking to give my word of honour that they should not proceed beyond the Prah. A consultation with the headman of carriers followed, but all in vain; they would not go. Nothing more was to be done there. I went and made inquiries as to my legal position in enforcing carriers. I was informed that martial law was not in force. There was a labour ordinance which enacted that in cases of emergency native labour could be conscripted, but so great was the panic at Accra, the seat of government, where the Gold Coast Volunteers had already been called out, that there was no hope of the Legislative Council promulgating this ordinance, which in any case required the signature of the Governor himself. Then came a ray of hope. It was a telegram from Captain Anderson at Mansu, half way to Prahsu.

Mansu,
May 11th.

Arrived here at one o'clock noon to-day. Frontier police left here this morning no information obtainable here road all clear to Prahsu wire down between here and Prahsu will be all right by to-morrow.

ANDERSON.

Armed with this telegram I went off and had a second interview with the chief, showed it to him, and pointed out that he must see for himself that it was quite safe to go as far as Prahsu. The headmen were called together and on my giving my word of honour that only those who had volunteered should proceed north of the Prah, I was promised the two hundred and fifty carriers by 4 p.m.

At that hour the bugles once more rang out and amidst cheers from the gathering populace, the fourth successive column, nearly a mile long, passed out of sight. Captain Beamish was in command, accompanied by Sergeant Griggs, while Colour-Sergeant Mackenzie commanded the countermarching portion, consisting of half D Company.

The 75-mm. gun was again wheeled out from the godown. This was the third time it had left with a column for Prahsu and the second time it had been brought back at night on the heads of its own carriers disguised as machinery. It was our ruse to let the Ashantis know we had three guns. This time it was accompanied by all its ammunition, which absorbed a large proportion of the carriers. The ammunition was fixed, i.e. the cartridge and shell were in one, and the bearers were constructed to carry two double common or double incendiary shells each weighing 18 lb., or three common, shrapnel case, or ring shells each weighing 12½lb. as the load for each carrier. The gun on service was carried in parts on the heads of enlisted, well-trained Hausa carriers, numbering with reliefs thirty-two in all. One man carried all the spare parts, four carried the gun on a pole, two a wheel each, one the axle, four the cradle on a pole, and another four the trail on a pole too. The trail, the cradle, and the gun each weighed over 200 lb., and yet these Hausas could double for a mile

with this weight on their heads and if necessary to cross a narrow bridge two men only would take the whole weight. This gun was made by Vickers, Sons & Maxim, who supplied four similar guns to the Honourable Artillery Company's battery which was at that time on service in South Africa with the City Imperial Volunteers, except that this gun, to reduce the weight, was eleven inches shorter.*

Pleased as I was to get the fourth column to Prahsu off, I considered it advisable to postpone my departure until the last column had left. This was as well, for in the morning there was the same trouble over again. I consoled myself with the Accra paper of the previous day, just arrived by steamer. I read:

"The Ashantis are determined to throw off the British yoke. The enemy it is said are able to raise 50,000 men. For some time past the Ashantis have been making prodigious preparations for a struggle, and it is predicted that with the rainy season setting in it will be impossible to undertake offensive or punitive expeditions and they will have to be deferred until October."

I then read a long list of tribes who had already risen. I was startled to see that the Adansis were not among their number. The most was made of it. It offered a chance of staying the Adansis if I could only get off. Captain Haslewood and myself, with headquarter escort and carriers, were off at 1 p.m., with the positive assurance that the other carriers would be ready at 6 p.m. to leave with the last column under Colour-Sergeant Mackenzie with half D Company, with a medical unit under Staff-Sergeant Payne.

My final act at Cape Coast Castle was to call in at the telegraph office. There I was handed a copy of a telegram that had been handed in at Prahsu. I was told that Ahuryi referred to was twenty miles from Kumasi. The cable ran as follows:

To Adansonia, London.

Native rising general Penzelone. Fighting around Ahuryi. Compelled retire to Beckwai with our lives only. Cannot obtain arms. Cable to Prahsu.

(*Signed*) JONES.

* The four guns may still be seen on the square of the headquarters of the Honourable Artillery Company in London.

With our departure and that of the last column there would be in the seventy miles between Prahsu and Cape Coast Castle, counting the Frontier Police column, seven separate columns of varying strength and length marching simultaneously at seven different places along its route, the culminating effort to expand ourselves to impersonate the Expeditionary Force which was to follow us.

The Fantis through whose villages headquarters first passed watched our progress in silence. The tragedies of the past when they were the constant prey of the Ashantis were still fresh in their memories. Would these tragedies return in the coming war and would the black troops be able to save them? These were the questions which haunted those Fantis whom our native Intelligence interrogated during our halts. Some measure of confidence, however, appeared to have been created by the constant stream of troops passing through day after day, but the Fantis knew it was to war, and a terrible war too, that these soldiers were marching, and until victory was assured there could be no rest and peace for them. It was to be an anxious time for the Fantis and by their many questions nothing less than the presence of white troops once more would give them the full measure of confidence for their own safety.

On May 14th, the third day out from Cape Coast Castle, when headquarters was about to halt for the night, I was handed an envelope marked, "Opened at Prahsu, sent on by special messenger. (Signed) W. A. Edwards, Lieutenant."

On opening it I read:

Ashanti Goldfields Corporation, Limited,
Obuassi, Prahsu,
West Africa.
May 12, 1900.

To the Officer Commanding the West African Frontier Force.

SIR,

I am in receipt of information that a fight between the Adansi and the Beckwais is imminent to-day at a place on the main road to Kumasi, about a day's journey north of this. As the Adansis according to the latest reports received, are avowed enemies of the British,

and of Beckwa, in consequence of his friendship, our position here, being without arms, is somewhat critical. I hear that the Beckwais are only armed with the flintlock and that the strength of his force is about three thousand men. The Adansis on the other hand have between five thousand and six thousand.

You had better push on here as rapidly as possible. One of our men came through from the coast yesterday and reports the road all clear. The trouble is north and north-east of this.

I am,
Yours faithfully
H. L. WEBSTER,
General Superintendent.

This letter removed all doubts about the Adansis and confirmed that the King of Beckwai was remaining loyal so far. It was not difficult to see the reason for this hostility. The Beckwais were a much more powerful tribe than the Adansis and had a larger fighting force. It was obvious that the greater part of the Beckwai fighting men were disloyal, and the Adansis, knowing this fact, meant to deal with the loyal portion and force them to join the rebels. There was another reason too. This "imminent" fight was two days previous to my receipt of the news, when Prahsu had already been occupied by our troops and more were following rapidly up. These movements were bound to be known to both the Adansis and Beckwais. The Adansis, "avowed enemies of the British," obviously intended to oppose our advance from Prahsu through their territory and sought the co-operation of the Beckwais. The King of Beckwai "in consequence of his friendship," referring no doubt to the protection he gave to Mr. Jones and his party after their flight from Ahuryi, evidently hesitated to join in.

Whether the Beckwais and Adansis had settled their differences or the Ashanti Goldfields, with forty-seven Europeans, had been wiped out I knew not. I only knew that if our little force advanced from Prahsu it must be opposed by the Adansis numbering five to six thousand men and possibly the Beckwais too.

I opened out my map. I worked out that to get to Obuassi

we must advance eighteen miles into Adansi territory to Fumsu, then cross the River Fum and proceed in a westerly direction to the Ashanti Goldfields. Such was the position I had to face. I at once despatched instructions under an escort to Prahsu, where the officers already knew the contents of Mr. Webster's letter, to send forward the Sierra Leone Frontier Police at dawn and that I was following up with all speed.

Snatching a few hours' rest, headquarters were on the move again at 2 a.m. for Prahsu. The darkness was intense, progress was very slow, and the monotony of this never-ending forest had already begun to pall. As dawn broke we were reminded of the full significance of the jungle forest. The huge trees, the thick undergrowth, the enormous creepers, the semi-darkness, the clammy and damp atmosphere, and the narrow path winding away in the distance like the moving body of an enormous snake whose head one could never see. Instinctively one glanced sideways at the great unseen. The creepy feeling and the impulse to rush along and leave it behind. The longing for the sight of the sun. Such were our feelings, and right glad were we all to see the open space at Prahsu before us. We could see the rest-house and a very large open space where four years previously large military huts built of bamboo materials were standing in rows, a field hospital, and all the paraphernalia of a military camp, but now there were only a few native huts and some temporary shelters in the course of completion.

Officers were seen running in and out of native huts, trying in vain, as I learned, to collect carriers for the troops to support the advance of the Sierra Leone Frontier Police, which so far had met with no opposition from the Adansis and were still moving forward.

Taking over control, I directed Captain Haslewood, who had the list of carriers volunteering to proceed beyond the Prah, to identify and muster those now at Prahsu; I wrote and despatched orders to upcoming columns to hasten and sent forward the native head of Intelligence and his assistant to find out what they could. The troops, their reserve ammuni-

tion, their food supply, the medical unit, and the personal baggage were all waiting for their carriers to move. None were forthcoming. Every moment we expected to hear of the presence of the Adansis being reported, when support must be sent forward; so in desperation I asked Mr. Tring, P.W.D., for his labourers, but on his appealing to them, they bolted. At this critical juncture tidings were received that the Adansis in the villages already passed were most friendly and had made offerings of flowers as the troops went by.

Was this a blind? It was answered by the return of the native head, who assured me that the Adansis had decided not to fight. At the very first village he had ascertained that the Adansi fighting men had been sent to their homes, and he had actually spoken to two of them who had done so, to verify it.

All this sounded too good to be true, but it was, for late that evening the following was received from the O.C. S.L.F.P.

Fumsu, 3.15 p.m.

Arrived safely. Things appear very serious from news gathered and relief is urgently needed at KUMASI. Plenty of fighting to be done. All appear friendly up to here. Have done my utmost to secure carriers and two chiefs have promised to send carriers PRAHSU to-morrow.

Then came this letter.

Obuassi,
May 14, 1900.

To the Officer Commanding West African Frontier Force, Prahsu.

DEAR SIR,

Since my letter of Saturday my spies have returned from Adansi and they report that there is no danger of fighting unless the Adansis are attacked. I am also in receipt of a friendly letter from the King of Adansi.

I hear from our Mr. Daw that you are instructed to remain at Prahsu until further orders.

I may say that since my communication of Saturday I have heard

no confirmation of fighting and we consider your presence at Prahsu will reassure our people sufficiently.

I am, Sir,
Yours truly,
H. L. WEBSTER,
per pro. Ashanti Goldfields Corporation, Ltd.

I felt so thankful that I had magnified the strength of my command at Cape Coast Castle on the way up. This letter, too, supported a report that the road to Kwisa, my objective, as stated in my despatch to the Colonial Secretary, was open and safe.

CHAPTER SIX

A Grave Appeal

PRAHSU, on May 15th, was alive once more. The news that the Adansis were not going to oppose us had got round. All but the carriers were openly expressing their delight. A great cheer arose as a column of marching troops was seen approaching with bugles sounding. It was Captain Beamish's column answering my request to push on with all speed to Prahsu. Preceded by an advance guard, the gun detachment was striding along with the 75-mm. gun on their heads in splendid style, with a long string of carriers carrying its heavy ammunition following immediately behind. Then came Captain Beamish with D Company and the remainder of the loaded carriers. A few minutes sufficed to form up the troops, assemble the gun, and stack the loads of food, ammunition, and stores. The parade was then dismissed.

I returned to the rest-house to consider my future plans. There was no disguising the fact that the Adansis, as "the avowed enemies of the British," had sworn fetish with the Ashantis. The inference was obvious. We had bluffed them and the penalty, unless it could be prevented, would come; but once at Kwisa, that stronghold on the top of the Moinsi hills and in the very centre of the Adansi country, we could await the arrival of the Expeditionary Force to deal with them. For the time being the bluffing tactics had to go on and with the knotty problem of the carriers still to be solved, the method of bluffing required careful consideration.

My first duty was to report to the Colonial Secretary my intention to advance to Kwisa, my previous request to move forward having been turned down, the reason I gathered being

that the authorities were averse to my leaving Prahsu, for, with the exception of the Gold Coast Volunteers called out to defend Accra and the Gold Coast detachments at Cape Coast and Elmina, there were no other troops in the colony. I had, however, decided to try to get to Kwisa and risk censure. Fortunately tacit approval had already been given by the arrival at 3.50 that afternoon of this telegram from the Colonial Secretary at Accra:

"Please leave twenty men at Prahsu to await arrival of Donovan who is bringing twenty of his men. The forty under Donovan will then proceed to the Ashanti Goldfield mines."

I had hoped to receive a definite decision on my letter of May 9th, written at Cape Coast Castle, submitting my proposal to concentrate at Kwisa, which had been withheld and so far turned down. This, however, arrived next day in the following telegram:

"Your letter May 9th and telegram 15th received. Action approved. You will want all available men hence I sent police. Rebels in great numbers and very slim. Beckwais loyal good luck."

There was this, too, which the Colonial Secretary had sent on:

"Willcocks telegraphs that he left Jebba May 15th and expects arrive Lagos May 23rd. He adds, 'Hope that small detachments will not be pushed too far up country as they arrive unless urgently necessary. I [Willcocks] am of opinion that troops not actually required for immediate work would be better sent only far enough to concentrate as near scene of probable operations as possible, consistent with military requirements, so as to deal crushing blow simultaneously, but as I do not know details cannot say more.' Telegram ends."

Colonel J. Willcocks, C.M.G., D.S.O.,* Commandant of the West African Frontier Force, was the senior officer on the west coast of Africa. He had a wonderful war record and was a soldier with a very great reputation. He had served in eight or nine campaigns and was one of the first officers to receive the Distinguished Service Order. I calculated that he

* General Sir James Willcocks, G.C.B., G.C.M.G., K.C.S.I., D.S.O.

should be arriving at Cape Coast Castle on May 26th or 27th. His reference to detachments implied that they were landing before he arrived, but there was no indication of what they consisted or the nature and strength of the Expeditionary Force. It was, however, quite clear that a concentration at Kwisa, which I was carrying out, was in accordance with his own expressed wish. I had done the right thing and the local authorities had approved of my action too. We had only got to wait at Kwisa till the various detachments of the Expeditionary Force had turned up; Colonel Willcocks himself should be there the first few days of June, when the great advance I had planned in my despatch of May 9th would take place.

Another communication from the Colonial Secretary was:

"If possible take as much rice as you can for Kumasi. Much wanted. Rebels in great numbers around Kumasi. Governor shut in. Lines of communication closed."

The immediate problems to be tackled were carriers and our arrival at Kwisa in the greatest possible military strength. I replied to the telegram about Sub-Assistant Commissioner Donovan:

"Suggest police bring extra rifles for arming Europeans of Ashanti Goldfields as I consider it imperative to have the S.L.F. Police on relief by Donovan."

I took even a bolder step. I telegraphed Captain Crean to send up the detachments at Cape Coast and Elmina for duty at Prahsu under Captain Slater. To the Colonial Secretary I telegraphed:

"Have called for Elmina and Cape Coast detachments urgently required garrison Prahsu. Kindly inform me arrival of reinforcements or when expected. This information would greatly facilitate my movements."

I was very sorry indeed for Captain Crean. He had seen Sub-Assistant Commissioner Donovan ordered up and had sent me several private wires imploring that Captain Slater should be sent back to take his place. I had to remain adamant, so imperative were the needs on the spot for his services as transport officer.

The carrier question was indeed proving a knotty problem. With Captain Haslewood I went through the list of carriers who had volunteered at Cape Coast Castle to go on beyond the Prah. Armed with this list we collected all the carriers we could find but did not succeed in obtaining the services of a single one not on that list. The total was 246 for the 1,300 loads we had to transport. We drew up a programme. These carriers were to proceed to Fumsu that day, return on the 17th, to Fumsu again on the 18th, and to Kwisa on the 19th. This disposed of 492 loads, of which 100 were bags of rice, our own rations, which I had now earmarked for Kumasi only. With regard to the ammunition for our own use, I told Captain Haslewood that the troops must carry it, amounting to 200 rounds per man and 200 rounds per man in reserve.

"It cannot be done, sir," came his prompt reply.

I told him that I hoped the troops would carry not only ·303 ammunition for carbines and maxim guns, but the whole of the artillery ammunition, as well as the ammunition for Kumasi, and the kegs of powder which we had brought up from Cape Coast Castle for the Beckwai levies we hoped to raise.

I shall never forget the look Captain Haslewood gave me. He must have thought that I had become demented. I smilingly explained that I proposed, if I could, to put into practice a scheme of my own, which had been intended to enable the W.A.F.F. to have its reserve ammunition, food, baggage, etc., during military operations, where for transport purposes native carriers had to be obtained, in other words, a brigade transport company.

The basis of the scheme was that each soldier should be trained to carry on his head a box of ammunition, 850 rounds, or a bearer (three rounds) of 75-mm. ammunition, in addition to his arms, equipment, and his own ammunition, that is to say, the total amount of reserve ammunition a brigade transport company would carry would be 100,000 rounds of ·303 ammunition and 100 rounds of 75-mm. gun ammunition. The company, at the same time, would carry out the duties of protecting the native carriers transporting food, baggage, etc.

I had practised and tested the scheme with my company, E Company, now at Prahsu, but much to my regret the scheme never matured.*

Captain Haslewood expressed very great surprise that a soldier could carry 1,050 rounds of ammunition with his rifle and equipment. I assured him that E Company had done this, but that this time it would have to be a voluntary effort on their part, and that I must first obtain their assent, since they might not like being the only soldiers called upon to do it. To convince Captain Haslewood of the weight these Nupe soldiers were capable of carrying I referred to my own orderly. This man, when I was helping to make a military camp just below Lokoja, on the River Niger, was sent down to the river bank where a stern-wheeler was lying to bring back to my bungalow a large barrel of Schweppes, containing ninety-eight bottles of soda water tightly packed in straw. I sent six Nupe soldiers to help him. I had carefully explained to them all that they were to roll the barrel very carefully so as not to break any of the bottles. Imagine my surprise when, looking out, I saw coming towards me that enormous barrel perched upright on the head of my orderly, who had a grin on his face, while the others marched in strict military style as an escort. He had carried it single-handed for over half a mile.

The consent of E Company was obtained. It was with some trepidation that I stepped forward to address the men. They were drawn up in ceremonial order with their maxim gun

* Lord Lugard, then in command of W.A.F.F. at Jebba wrote me on August 24, 1898:

"I have the honour to acknowledge your scheme for a brigade transport company, which I have read with the greatest interest. The pressure of work hitherto has been considerable and I have not had any time to devote to the consideration of plans of transport in the field on active operations. It is my hope that we may be able to institute, to some extent at least, animal transport before long, but if we are compelled to retain human transport I see many valuable points in the scheme you suggest. I have a lengthened experience of porter transport in Africa, and should we be compelled to retain this mode I will still more carefully consider your scheme and the suggestion of the permanent allocation of a company to transport duties."

detachment on their right. In physique they presented a magnificent appearance, comparing favourably with that of H.M. Guards. I had been received with a general salute and the precision with which the men presented arms bore testimony to the excellent work of their first subaltern, Lieutenant Percy A. Clive, Grenadier Guards, and their first senior British N.C.O., Colour-Sergeant Rolls, Grenadier Guards. The raising and two and a half years' contact with these Nupes enabled me to explain the position of affairs, and for them to understand exactly what was required of them. Their action was spontaneous: "Yah, yah, yah," and then a burst of cheering.

Shortly afterwards D Company expressed their willingness to do their share, an offer which, needless to say, was accepted. The transport difficulty was being solved. There was still the problem of how to keep up the bluffing tactics even more essential than ever to check the general rising and especially to influence the Beckwais to keep loyal. Our forward move would be under the very eyes of the Adansis when concealment of our numbers would be very difficult. I put into force the following plan. For three days and three nights a succession of columns were to move forward to their destinations in the Adansi country with full loads and back without loads to their starting-point, the forward ones by day showing strong military escorts, those returning by night showing carriers only. Each soldier on the backward journey was to be disguised as a carrier, his carbine, bayonet, equipment, ammunition, uniform, and red cap were to be placed in his brown blanket, neatly made into a bundle and carried on the head. In the darkness, passing in single file through the villages, the soldiers would be indistinguishable from the carriers. On the forward journey by daylight, the soldiers would resume their uniform and on passing through the villages would be counted by the Adansis as more troops coming up. The carriers when returning unloaded would be carrying on their heads their personal belongings, which included a sleeping mat, which would give the bundle a longish appearance, and in the darkness not unlike the load carried by the soldiers.

A start was made. The Lagos Hausas and the medical unit under Dr. Barker were got off first; then at intervals in two columns E Company by half-companies, the two hundred and forty-five carriers being divided amongst the three columns. The crossing of the river Prah by the only ferry boat available took a considerable time and while the troops were waiting on the further bank a party of about fifty Adansis were seen approaching. They were unarmed and turned out to be carriers for us, not from the two chiefs as stated by Lieutenant Edwards in his note, but from the King of Adansi himself. This was indeed encouraging; they were allotted to the loads already across the Prah, and we were fifty carriers to the good.

D Company with the 75-mm. gun were to follow the next day, May 17th, while I was to remain with headquarters at Prahsu to see E Company start off again.

Seated in the rest-house with Captain Haslewood, both pleased with the result of our day's work and the certainty of occupying Kwisa, I saw the door suddenly open and a soldier enter with another telegram in his hand. I opened and read it. I felt stunned. For a minute or two I could not speak. Then I whispered to Captain Haslewood, "Pack up at once."

I handed him the telegram. He read and understood it. In silence we both got up to leave. In half an hour we had entered the ferry-boat and were on our way northward.

Tramping along with the escort and carriers I racked my brains to know what to do. I kept taking the telegram out of my pocket and reading:

From the Colonial Secretary, Accra.
To Captain Hall, Officer Commanding Relief Column, Prahsu.

May 16th.

Received PRAHSU, 4.47 p.m., May 16th.

Very important you should push on to Kumasi with all speed, regard being had of course to military considerations. Governor reports May 8th that unless relieved by May 26th he must endeavour to force a passage through to Prahsu.

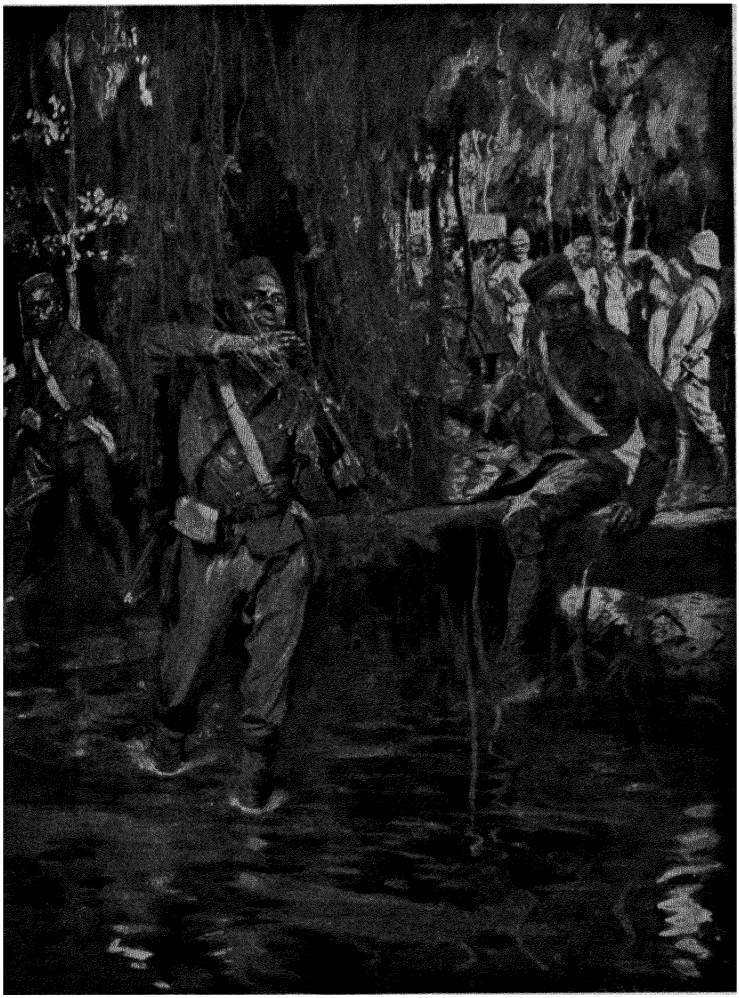
I kept saying to myself, "Nine days left." Then again, "Only nine days left, seventy miles to go, 40,000 to be tackled,

350 black soldiers available. Impossible, impossible, impossible."

A ray of hope flashed on me. Kumasi might hold on a little longer after they had been repulsed, as they must be, in their hopeless attempt to break out. In three weeks Colonel Willcocks would be there. No, there could be no failure of the fifteen officers and 520 black soldiers responsible for the lives of the Governor, the white ladies, and the four thousand non-Ashanti inhabitants of Kumasi. Once the attempt was made there could be no going back. Anything, a bullet, a knife, or a piece of poison would be preferable to the terrible ordeal of human sacrifice. Yes, something must be done in the next nine days to avert the greatest tragedy of our time.

We halted late at night in an Adansi village to obtain a few hours' rest. There we found the native head of Intelligence carrying on for the second time the duty I had entrusted him with—owing to my sudden departure from Prahsu I had had to find a substitute to carry my bed valise. I had a talk with the man. He had been able to ascertain that there was a desire on the part of the Adansis to play a waiting game and be on the winning side. The young hotheads, headed by the King's young heir, Kwabina Fourey, were all for joining the rising and opposing our advance, but wiser counsel had since prevailed. I decided then and there to seek an interview with the King of Adansi and instructed the native head to proceed in the morning to Fomena, the capital of Adansi, where the King was, to request that the King would receive me at a grand palaver at noon on May 20th and that Kwabina Fourey should be present too.

On the morning of May 20th, when Dompuassi, Kwisa, Sherimassi, Fumsu, Atobiassi, all in Adansi country, and Prahsu were occupied by our troops, Captain Haslewood and I sallied forth from Kwisa to attend the grand palaver. The sun had broken through the clouds, and after a march of one mile through the dense jungle forest we approached the large open space in front of the King's Palace at Fomena. We could see large, multi-coloured umbrellas standing out in the sunshine, and then a guard of honour of W.A.F.F., and opposite to them



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"Push through for God's sake!"

and flanking the row of umbrellas strong contingents of armed Adansi warriors. Under the central umbrella was seated the King of Adansi, while the flanking ones were occupied by the chiefs, the court officials and the numerous attendants, all gaudily attired, standing behind. The ceremony about to be enacted was taking place on the very same spot where, in 1874, Field-Marshal Viscount Wolseley (then Major-General) arranged and signed a treaty of peace which terminated the Ashanti War.

Suddenly a word of command rang out. Our guard of honour presented arms, the bugle sounded, and the King and chiefs were seen to stand up. Captain Haslewood and I saluted, approached the King, and through the medium of our interpreter I addressed him and his chiefs. I told them how glad I was to meet them again and well remembered the good work they had done with Baden-Powell's scouts for the Great White Queen four years previously. I also thanked them for supplying food and sending down carriers to Prahsu. Then, making a considerable pause, I told them that I had come to have a most serious talk with them. I wanted to know definitely whether they were going to remain loyal to the Great White Queen. I wished to have an answer not only from the King but from all the chiefs, including Kwabina Fourey and I would give them a few minutes to think it over.

An animated discussion arose; then, amidst silence, the King rose and through his interpreter informed me that he and his chiefs wished to remain loyal, and pointed out that if they had not desired to do so they would have gone over to the rebels and opposed our advance.

I then asked if the King and chiefs would have it put in writing so that the Great White Queen would know. Another animated discussion took place. The King again rose and informed me that he and all the chiefs agreed to put it in writing.

A table, chairs, and paper were then produced. Captain Haslewood and I sat down and the wording of a treaty was there and then settled and put into writing. Three copies were made, one to be sent back to the Big White Colonel in supreme command, another for them to keep, and a third for myself.

The three copies were then read carefully and compared with each other. I signed all three first, then sealing wax was produced which I had carefully brought with me so as to ensure finger prints in addition to the usual black cross. The object of the sealing wax was carefully explained to the King and chiefs about to sign. They were first to make their black cross with a pen and then, when a piece of melted sealing wax was dropped on each agreement, they were at once to press it down with their thumb. In the case of the King it nearly led to a scene. Strict instructions were given him to lick his thumb first. He contemptuously pretended to do it, with the result that he nearly burnt it, and the crowd not knowing what had really happened thought he was taken ill and much commotion went on. Quiet was restored, however, and all the documents were completed. The interpreter was then called upon to read the agreement out to the whole gathering, who received it with evident approval.

I then rose to address them. I thanked them most sincerely for promising to assist the British Government, and in bidding them farewell told them frankly that they were wise men to have nothing to do with the rebels; it would only bring misery, ruin, and burnt homes. I also thanked them for taking care of the little wooden cross and grave of a soldier of the 2nd West Yorkshire Regiment at Kwisa, and pointing in that direction I emphasized that the Great White Queen would never allow the Ashantis to rule over that sacred spot again.

On returning to Kwisa I reviewed the situation in the light of the new agreement that I had made. Its actual wording was as follows:

An Agreement on the one part by Captain W. M. Hall, Officer Commanding the advanced portion of the British troops now advancing on Kumasi on behalf of the Government of the Gold Coast Colony and on the other by Kwakun Kwasie King of the ADANSIS.

Whereby the latter solemnly reassures the former of his loyalty to Her Majesty the Queen, promises his assistance to the English*

* The Ashantis, at that time, classified the White man by the name of the language he spoke.

Government, and further agrees to make no war or permit raiding upon the King of Beckwai, his people or country.

Further, both the Kings of Beckwai and Adansi will be held responsible to the English Government for any act of aggression committed by either party upon the lives or property of the other, or upon any subject loyal to Her Majesty the Queen.

On his part Captain Hall assures the King of Adansi of the protection of the English Government so long as he shall remain loyal and faithfully carry out the terms of this agreement or of any previous agreement made with the English Government with which agreement this in no way supersedes or interferes.

Given and signed at Fomena this twentieth day of May, nineteen hundred.

Then followed signatures, thumb prints, and crosses of the parties to the agreement.

I tried hard to get an assurance from the Adansis in writing that they would not join the Beckwais if they went over to the rebels. The Adansis flatly refused, but they pointed out that if the Beckwai army mobilized to help us, the Adansis would carry out their promise to help us and mobilize their army too. This they said would be going one better than in 1896 when they only found one contingent for Baden-Powell's scouts.

I was thus left with no alternative but to tie down both the Adansis and Beckwais against any act of aggression, in the hope that my bluffing tactics might again succeed and I would be able to make the Beckwais a party to the same agreement. I was, however, not a little perturbed to learn from the native head of Intelligence that the Adansis were secretly talking about the Beckwais joining the rebels and that the Adansis would follow suit. If this was true it would be the last straw.

My fears about the Beckwais were soon allayed by the receipt of the following letter:

The Ashanti Company, Limited,
Beckwai.
May 18, 1900.

To the Officer in Charge of the Relief Forces.

DEAR SIR,

The bearer of this letter belongs to the friendly tribes of the Beckwais who have remained loyal throughout. From the village

of Esan Kwanta to the village of Esumeja—two and a half hours' walking north of this—there is no danger being in Beckwai's territory. North of Esumeja the fighting is likely to begin.

The Hausa who accompanies this was left behind sick with one of the companies going up. He has been unable to join his troop.

Kumasi is closely invested at present and we have done our utmost to get messengers through, without success so far.

Beckwai is a large town twenty minutes' walk off the main road. It would be well you had a talk with the local chief in case you require some native assistance. I will try to meet you on the road south of Beckwai and explain how things are here. We are a party of seven white men. We had to seek refuge here ten days ago.

Yours faithfully,

WILLIAM JONES,

General Superintendent.

Beckwais loyal and an offer of assistance from them! How marvellous! Am I really to have the help of 10,000 native levies from Adansi and Beckwai to take with my command and save the Governor? I have got six days to do it in and the kegs of powder and lead already brought up here. How wonderful it will be if we do save Kumasi after all!

CHAPTER SEVEN

We Face the Ashantis

At Kwisa we were indeed in the wilderness. We were cut off from all telegraphic communication with the outer world, the lines to Prahsu and Kumasi having been destroyed weeks previously. We had ascended the Moinsi hills and made long marches without hammocks for the officers and British N.C.O.s in our effort to reach the goal we had set out to attain. We had tramped the narrow path, that winding snake ever before us, disappearing under rivers only to appear again on the other side, and whose head we could never see. One hundred and nine miles of it!

How far success with the Adansis and Beckwais had been attained was illustrated by the fact that Mr. Webster, of the Ashanti Goldfields, had written me to the effect that no troops were required at the mines and that the country was quiet and the mines working as usual. Even more convincing was the arrival at Kwisa of Mr. Jones, General Superintendent of the Ashanti Company, and Mr. Cookson, with their hammocks, baggage, and carriers to fulfil his promise to try and meet us south of Beckwai. From the time the party left Beckwai they had found the villagers of Beckwai and Adansi most friendly towards them and no attempt whatever had been made to molest the column, a marked contrast to their flight from Ahuryi with their lives only ten days previously.

How long would this state of affairs last? I had secured an agreement with the Adansis and hoped to make the Beckwais a party to it, but the writing on the wall was very significant. Prudence suggested that the proper course would be to await the arrival of the expected reinforcements. When would they arrive? The Colonial Secretary at Accra had not answered my

telegram sent off at Prahsu. Evidently he did not know. There were the ominous words "must endeavour" of the Governor's appeal staring one in the face. There were only six days left. We all recognized that once the attempt to break out was made there could be no going back, and to expect 350 black soldiers, even supported by Beckwai and Adansi levies to get to Kumasi was equally futile. A message to Kumasi to hold on would solve the problem, but how was that to be done? The King of Beckwai had failed; Mr. Jones himself had failed; and how was one to know, even if a messenger went, that he got there in the time available?

There was the question of heliographing, which Mr. Jones had previously suggested in a letter, or of using signal rockets which he told us could be obtained from the Ashanti Goldfields. Kwisa was a possible spot, being on the top of the Moinsi hills and only thirty-two miles from Kumasi, too far for signal rockets and perhaps for effective heliographing, but under favourable circumstances it might be made to succeed, especially as Kumasi, knowing of reinforcements being on the way, would be on the lookout.*

It was decided to try the experiment on the following morning from a tall tree, and if an answering flash was obtainable, all would be well. We had no heliograph set, shaving mirrors were to be tried. In the morning it was raining hard and the experiment quite out of the question.

Inaction was cut short by the arrival of a panting messenger with the news that the Ashantis were advancing south to attack the Beckwais. He handed me a telegram and a letter. The telegram was from the telegraph operator at Esumeja, written on a form there and brought by hand, as the wires were cut.

Esumeja,
May 20th.

Please hasten force. Enemy are now at Edjumun about three miles from here. Urgent.

PLANGE,
Telegraph operator.

* Known effective range of a ten-inch helio is about eighty to a hundred miles in the clear atmosphere of either Africa or India.

The letter read:

Beckwai,
May 20th.

DEAR SIR,

The King of Beckwai has the honour to inform you of the following movements of the enemy.

Spies sent out by the King have just come in and report as follows:

The enemy who have entrenched themselves at Karsi* have advanced on Esumeja and Beckwai and are at present at Edjumun, the first village from Esumeja and distant about one hour, so the King begs to inform you that all haste is necessary to prevent the advance of the enemy on Beckwai.

He also begs to inform you of the treachery of the Adansis as in his opinion they are trying their best to delay you as much as possible so that the enemy will have a good opportunity of taking up a good position near Esumeja.

The King is positive that the Adansis have already informed the Achimas of the arrival of the B. troops, their strength, etc.

Yours faithfully,
FITZ CLAUDE DAHNE.

Now or never! The decision had to be taken. The black troops must engage the Ashantis.

An acknowledgement was despatched to the King of Beckwai and informing him of our immediate advance to his assistance. In half an hour we had started in fighting formation with our two hundred and forty-three carriers. A rapid advance was imperative. I could not await the arrival of Captain Slater and Dr. Obasa with a convoy from Prahsu ordered up to take command of the garrison left at Kwisa. I could not possibly spare a single officer either, to await their arrival in a day or two; so at my suggestion Mr. Jones and Mr. Cookson kindly consented to take over temporary charge next morning, on Captain Beamish, with half D Company, our rearguard, moving forward, if by then Captain Slater had not arrived.

We pushed forward in a series of supporting columns, bivouacking for the night, and at 9 a.m. on the morning of May 22nd our advanced troops had occupied Esumeja. The first report I received was from Captain Wilson at Eginassi, six

* Near Kumasi.

miles south of Esumeja, the latter place being only fourteen miles from Kumasi.

Officer Commanding Troops from Captain Wilson.

22.5.00. 10.15 a.m.

This has just come in. The Beckwais were starting when the messengers left, so should reach Esumeja soon after Captain Anderson with his one hundred and forty-five men. I am remaining here as one hundred and forty-five with the Beckwais seems to me sufficient to hold Esumeja: and the enemy might work round on our right to this road.

M. WILSON,
Captain.

The enclosure was:

Beckwai,
May 22nd.

DEAR SIR,

The King of Beckwai begs to inform you the following:

The King of Esumeja came in here last night (21st) the enemy having advanced to Esumeja and the Kokofus having allowed them to come in Kokofu.

He is now sending troops to Esumeja to remain there (if possible). He informs you this so that you may not take them for enemies.

I am going with the telegraph clerk accompanied by the Beckwais to bring away the instruments.

The King of Beckwai directly he hears of your arrival at Esumeja will immediately come there to let you know where the enemy is.

I am, Sir,
Your obedient servant,
FITZ CLAUDE DAHNE
(*pro.* King of Beckwai).

This letter was followed up by a report from Captain Anderson at Esumeja, stating that he had entered the place without opposition and had taken up a defensive position there. His information was that the Ashantis were still at Edjumun, three miles north, and scouts and patrols reported no signs of their moving southward. The Beckwai levies had therefore returned to Beckwai.

I therefore decided to pay an official visit to the King of

Beckwai at his capital, instead of his coming to see me on my arrival at Esumeja, as he had suggested in his letter. Not only would a grand palaver at Beckwai be more appropriate but would enable the King and his chiefs to be a party to the Adansi agreement and more suitable for arrangements to be made for the mobilization of his army to co-operate with that of the Adansis in a joint effort with our three hundred and fifty black soldiers to attempt to force our way into Kumasi, to which I was now definitely committed in the four days still left. For this purpose a letter was got ready by Captain Haslewood and despatched to Beckwai, requesting a grand palaver at Beckwai at 8 a.m. the following morning, May 23rd.

On my arrival with headquarters at Eginassi that same afternoon I was handed an official envelope which had come in from Beckwai. It was addressed to "Officer Commanding West African Frontier Force" and had obviously been tampered with. The letter was from His Excellency the Governor of the Gold Coast in Kumasi, and ran as follows:

The Fort, Kumasi,
April 30, 1900.

SIR,

1. I have the honour to inform you that shortly after leaving Esumeja you pass out of Beckwai country into country overruled by the Kumassis. On coming through this district on the 29th Captain Aplin, Commander of the Lagos Constabulary, was attacked at Asagu and laagered at that place for the night after destroying it. The next day he was attacked within three miles of Kumasi where there was a stockade and there was severe fighting.

2. I communicate this information to you so that you may be prepared should you have to encounter opposition.

3. It is very desirable that you should come to Kumasi as soon as possible and I trust that you will do your utmost to bring in the ·303 ball ammunition which you are transporting as it is very necessary to have it.

I have the honour to be, Sir,
Your obedient servant,
F. M. HODGSON,
Governor.

The Officer Commanding the West African Frontier Force.

Here was something definite at last. This letter was intended to be handed to me on my arrival at Cape Coast Castle. It had been detained at Beckwai and opened there. We had learned on disembarking that the rising was becoming general and that the King of Beckwai was remaining loyal. Had he been influenced by this letter? He must have been cognisant of its contents. His letter to me received at Prahsu stated that "Kumasi was entirely cut off and short of ammunition." I wondered at the time how he came by this information.

The King would also gain another important piece of information which probably influenced his decision to hold his hand. This was that the Governor's letter was addressed to "Officer Commanding West African Frontier Force." Its contents were for the information of a new force. The King of Beckwai would not be slow to learn all about this new force. On the day after the letter was written and sent off Kumasi was closely invested and the whole country from Kumasi to the coast denuded of all troops. On May 8th a general rising was decided upon, all were for it but the King of Beckwai. The Ashantis knew only too well that the British Army was engaged in two wars, the South African War and the Boxer rising in China. They were urged on by exaggerated accounts of South African reverses, and they were told that even if any British regiments could be spared, they would certainly not be allowed to land and march up in the rainy and unhealthy season. They would die off like flies.

The King of Beckwai knew all this, too, but he knew more. A wonderful new force was coming, more numerous than the number of troops who came up in 1895, and certainly able to fight in the wet unhealthy season just as well as themselves. He would wait and see. He felt sure that his spies could be relied on to report our arrival on the Gold Coast, and it was with this knowledge that I had taken particular pains to magnify the command on the march up for the benefit of both the Kings of Beckwai and Adansi with so far gratifying results.

How I BLESSED THAT LETTER. It was a godsend. The King of Beckwai must support me now or face the alternative of an

Ashanti human sacrifice. The Ashantis would never forgive him for not joining.

I passed the letter to Captain Haslewood, who was resting after our march to Eginassi. The carriers were resting too. I was most anxious to get up stores, etc., to Amoaful, two miles north of Eginassi, that afternoon. This meant calling on the almost exhausted carriers to make another effort. Captain Wilson had already established a post at Amoaful to keep in touch with Captain Anderson's command at Esumeja and to watch for any movements of the enemy on our right flank. Our two hundred and forty-three carriers for the last two days had been working almost continuously, but there was still much to be got up from Kwisa, and this would entail several journeys back for all these carriers. Captain Slater had reported his arrival at Kwisa with the last of the ammunition for Kumasi, amounting to 13,200 rounds, and there were still a considerable number of loads at Kwisa and even at Prahsu. Our imperative march to check the Ashanti advance on Beckwai had necessitated leaving much behind. To get up all the food and ammunition to Kumasi, in addition to the requirements of our own command, in the four days left we must secure additional carriers and these I proposed to ask the King of Beckwai to supply.

Captain Wilson entered the little native hut to join us and to report that the Ashantis were still at Edjumun, there being no indications of their moving southward. In the courtyard of the hut my native servant Joseph had opened out my portable canvas table. We three then sat down on native stools, about a foot high, round the little table to partake of a so-called tea.

The discussion centred on the Governor's letter. We set to work to see what information we could gather from it. The letter was simple enough. We were to march up as soon as possible, be on our guard against attack, and do our utmost to bring along the ammunition for Kumasi. There was no mention of food whatever. Then came the problem. Eight days after the letter was written the Governor decided that if we did not arrive by May 26th he was coming out. What was the reason of this? It could not be entirely food. The

solution we came to was that the Governor, knowing that Aplin's column had taken twelve days to do the journey, considered that May 26th would give us ample time, and if we did not arrive the conclusion would be drawn that there was a general rising of the Ashantis, and Kumasi would become a rat-trap. We agreed that this was so and the date May 26th would see the stampede.

"That means," I said, "if we do not defeat the forty thousand Ashantis or succeed in forcing our way into Kumasi there must be a massacre."

Haslewood and Wilson nodded.

"Do you both agree?"

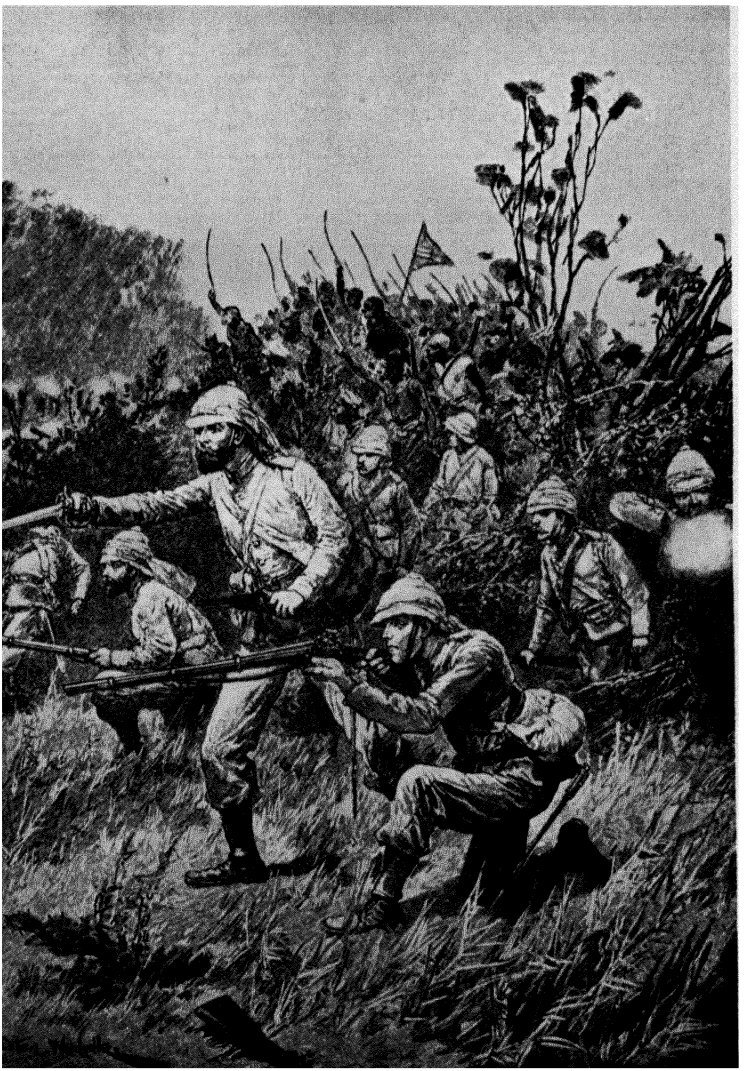
They nodded.

"Then," I said, "the attempt must be made and let us hope we may have the assistance of the Beckwai and Adansi armies."

We had settled that point. The next was to see if there was any practical chance of success. The fighting would be north of Esumeja and the only precedent we could work on was Wolseley's attempt over the very same bit of ground, some notes on which we fortunately had. I began reading aloud from Wolseley's description.

"I moved forward to Edjumun, the enemy disputing every mile of ground. There I established a fortified post where I left all my tents and baggage. On the 3rd instant I moved forward again, the enemy in great force opposing our advance and hanging round our flanks. I halted for the night on the Ardrah river, where under cover of darkness a bridge was constructed. In the morning a forward movement was commenced. The advance guard, under the command of Colonel M'Leod, 42nd Highlanders, was brought to a standstill shortly after the advance began; and a general action soon developed itself, lasting for more than six hours. The enemy did not, however, fight with the same courage as at Amoaful, for although their resistance was most determined their fire was wild, and they did not generally attack us at such close quarters as in the former action.

"The village of Ordahsu having been carried by the Rifle Brigade at nine o'clock, I massed all my force there, having



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42nd Highlanders leading the advance to Edjumun

previously passed all the reserve ammunition, field hospitals, and supplies through the troops, who held the road between the river and the village, a distance of about a mile. The enemy then attacked the village with large numbers from all sides, and for some hours we could make no progress, but steadily held our ground. The 42nd Highlanders being then sent to the front, advanced with pipes playing, and carried the enemy's position to the north of the village in the most gallant style, Captain Rait's Artillery doing most effective service in covering the attack which was led by Colonel M'Leod. After some further fighting on the front line a panic seemed to have seized the enemy, who fled along the road to Kumasi in complete rout. Although the columns they had detailed to assault our flanks and rear continued for some time afterwards to make partial attacks upon the village, we followed close upon the enemy's heels into Kumasi."

I stopped reading suddenly.

"Look here," I exclaimed, "we must create that panic. You fellows must work out a practical panic scheme; I am off to Amoaful with the convoy."

Tramping along the path I could not help contrasting the actions of Ordahsu and Amoaful. The former was severe, but Amoaful was a desperate affair.* The proud Ashantis would not be denied and for hours the issue hung in the balance. The 42nd Highlanders alone lost nine officers and one hundred and twenty-eight men, while the Naval Brigade, 23rd Royal Welch Fusiliers, the 1st Rifle Brigade, Wood's Regiment, and Russell's Regiment suffered heavily.

As I tramped along I began to realize the differences between

* Colonel Montagu Hall, 101st Fusiliers, then serving with his regiment in England, wrote at this time in his diary:

"News arrived which if true is most serious as to Sir Garnet Wolseley's force in Ashanti.

"Major Baird, among the killed, was our fellow passenger when I came home from India and was a first-rate fellow. If this news is true we may yet find ourselves in Ashanti. We are now the third regiment for foreign service and should the force suffer any disaster, troops must be sent out although we could not reach the Gold Coast till the season in which we could act with any hope of health has passed away."

the task fate had called upon me to carry through and that so brilliantly achieved by Field-Marshal Viscount Wolseley. The first was that our little force had escaped another Amoaful but must face another Ordahsu, and this time against an undefeated enemy, proud and defiant, longing to wipe out the stain of Amoaful and the stain of not preventing the removal of their King Prempeh. The second difference was that our goal was not Kumasi but the lives of four thousand human beings besieged in Kumasi, with a time limit already fixed.

I looked up at the tall cotton-trees, 200 to 300 feet high, to see a glimmer of grey sky suddenly appear, then broaden out as we debouched on to the open battlefield of Amoaful. It was in no way altered and a fitting, silent memorial to our glorious dead.

We found the detachment standing at arms with sentries posted, and a report for myself from Captain Anderson at Esumeja, "Situation unchanged, enemy still at Edjumun. Consider our position secure." The carriers were then unloaded, a zareba formed, and the return march commenced with the empty carriers and headquarter escort.

The return journey to Eginassi was begun. Night had fallen. The darkness amidst the creepers and tall cotton-trees became intense. The escort and carriers, tired out, were as silent as the forest itself. We moved silently as if in a trance, barefooted, as everybody was except myself, and each with his own thoughts. My own went back to the Governor's letter. How lucky it was it had been opened at Beckwai. I had heard and read before of open despatches and intercepted messages leading to most momentous results and even to great victories. I began to picture the grand palaver at Beckwai next morning. I saw myself addressing the King and chiefs. They listened intently. The King then rose to speak and as his eloquence increased in his appeal to help us, I saw how at a psychological moment the chiefs and sub-chiefs stood up cheering wildly. "To war, to war!" they were calling. The King had won them over; their army was to be mobilized at once. Ten thousand fully armed men, yes, ten thousand! Never mind the Adansi

army now, the Beckwai army would be ready to march in two days.

Visions arose of a great fight, the success of Wilson's great "panic" scheme, a last-minute victory, and on the walls of the Fort of Kumasi stood cheering defenders as we and our great Beckwai levies formed up to receive their congratulations. I even got so far as talking to the Governor himself and asking him what was the reason of his sudden decision of May 8th to leave by May 26th. I was right; it was not entirely on account of food. He was just going to tell me when a weird sound echoed through the forest. It was a sentry at Eginassi challenging us!

CHAPTER EIGHT

Hall has done it!

"IMPOSSIBLE!"* exclaimed Colonel Willcocks on reading the copy of a report from His Excellency the Governor of the Gold Coast in Kumasi, dated May 8th, that unless relieved by May 26th he must endeavour to force a passage through to Prahsu. "Why, he is besieged by forty thousand armed Ashantis and goodness only knows how many other tribes have joined them by now."

It was on this very last day that Colonel J. Willcocks, C.M.G., D.S.O., had landed at Cape Coast Castle from Northern Nigeria. He had been appointed to the supreme command of the Ashanti Field Force, the various units of which were being hastily assembled on the Gold Coast. He was accompanied by Captain M'Clintock, R.E., and Dr. M'Farlane.

The perusal of the other reports was a matter of careful thought and consideration. A cursory glance at them was sufficient to convince Colonel Willcocks that the task before him was a formidable one, for whatever the fate of Kumasi might be, the Ashantis would have to be reckoned with, which would involve a long and costly war. Fortunately public opinion in England had been aroused by the gravity of the situation and he had already received assurances from the Secretary of State for War and the Secretary of State for the Colonies that everything possible would be done to meet any demands he might make.

Sitting in his office in a house outside the Castle, Colonel

* "When I landed Kumasi was calling for help but help was then impossible."—Colonel Willcocks's despatches, *London Gazette*, December 4, 1900.

Willcocks began to formulate his plans. The Accra Volunteers had already been called out. That was something, but of the situation north of the Prah he had not the vaguest idea. Captain Hall in his last report had referred to his intention to advance to Kwisa, but as he mentioned that the rising of the Ashantis was general and that their numbers were being augmented daily by the addition of other tribes and also that the Adansis had sworn fetish to join the Ashantis, it seemed doubtful, even if his command reached Kwisa, whether it would be able to get any farther, while it might even now be in difficulties. At Prahsu, where the telegraph was still in working order to Cape Coast Castle, the situation was satisfactory. The garrison there had been increased by the recent arrival of one company 2nd W.A.F.F. with one maxim and R.A. detachment with one 7-pounder gun. Major Wilkinson* had already left Cape Coast Castle for Prahsu, and in view of possible eventualities, Colonel Willcocks at once despatched from Cape Coast Castle for Prahsu the 3rd W.A.F.F. under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Carter, C.M.G.,† with one Rocket Tube detachment.

Many problems in the organization of the Ashanti Field Force presented themselves, and Colonel Willcocks gave much thought to the various questions which must arise in the preparation and despatch of a field force. He was an officer of much active service and had specialized in the work of transport, and it was to this aspect of the problem that he turned his immediate attention. He had to estimate the probable strength of his force from beginning to end, the length of time they would be in the field, and to what extent food supplies and native carriers could be obtained locally. The experience of the expedition four years previously clearly showed the high proportion of non-combatants in the form of native carriers for transport purposes as compared with the fighting strength, and that this transport was only obtainable to a limited extent locally and the greater proportion of it had to be imported.

* Major-General Sir Percival Wilkinson, K.C.M.G., C.B.

† Brigadier-General C. H. P. Carter, C.B., C.M.G., C.B.E.

Colonel Willcocks had to consider the ammunition problem too. How would the native troops control their fire in the dense jungle forest in the presence of the Ashantis? How would the native gunners serve their 75-mm. gun? How about the wounded? All these were unknown factors against the terrible Ashantis. What Colonel Willcocks did know was that it required one carrier to carry a box of carbine ammunition containing 850 rounds, or, if carrying R.A. ammunition, only two rounds of common shell, while for each wounded, a hammock with four native hammock men and another four as relief was required. Immediate requirements first and see how the campaign gets on was therefore the order of the day.

Many were the inquiries made during those busy hours as to the progress of Captain Hall's command, which was known to have left Prahsu on May 17th on its northward march to Kwisa, and to the commander of which had been communicated by telegram before leaving Prahsu the appeal of His Excellency the Governor in Kumasi that unless relieved by May 26th he must endeavour to force a passage through to Prahsu.

On May 28th rumours came filtering through to Cape Coast Castle that disaster had befallen Captain Hall's command, and so persistent were these rumours that telegraph enquiries were made to Prahsu. It was with feelings of deep concern that definite news was received that a portion, at any rate, of Captain Hall's command had met with a reverse. On receipt of the official report from the officer commanding at Prahsu, Colonel Willcocks lost no time in cabling the substance of it to the Secretary of State for the Colonies in London. The cable read:

Cape Coast Castle,
May 29th.

Major Wilkinson at Prahsu reports that Lieutenant Slater* in command of what appears to have been an isolated detachment was on the way to relieve Kumasi when he was attacked near Kwisa by the rebels. The relief force was beaten, and Lieutenant Slater with a number of Hausas was killed.

WILLCOCKS.

* Then Assistant Inspector Gold Coast Constabulary, sometimes styled Captain.

Further details of the fighting were soon forthcoming. Two native soldiers, who were in the fighting, had succeeded in escaping and reaching Prahsu. They reported that not only had Lieutenant Slater's party been entirely destroyed but that Kwisa had been captured. They further reported that the Adansis had joined the rising and were moving south.

This confirmation of the cable of May 29th was also sent to London. It created no little doubt in the minds of many whether it was prudent to carry on the campaign with these native troops. This recent example of their fighting value only went to confirm the bitter experience of over a century, that it was useless to use native troops against so fierce an enemy. What could be done? To send white troops with the rainy and unhealthy season in full swing would be fatal, but still more so would it be to abandon Kumasi and the white ladies to their fate.

In the meantime Major P. S. Wilkinson, nothing daunted, pushed forward to Fumsu, half way between Prahsu and Kwisa, a place of strategical importance, and with one company 2nd W.A.F.F. and one maxim, with one 7-pounder gun, succeeded in securing the passage of the Fum. Within a few hours he had got the telegraph line working again between Fumsu and Prahsu. The 3rd W.A.F.F., under Lieutenant-Colonel Carter, C.M.G., were fast approaching Prahsu and thus in a position to support the troops at Fumsu in the event of the southerly movement of the Adansis developing.

Colonel Willcocks, however, was viewing the situation with some anxiety, for although reinforcements would arrive on June 1st, five days must elapse before they could be expected to reach Fumsu, even if the necessary transport was available. This would have to be obtained locally as it would be some time yet before the native carriers called for from other colonies would arrive.

The unexpected then happened. A startling telegram arrived. Colonel Willcocks could hardly believe his eyes. He heaved a sigh of relief when for the second time he read over the message announcing that His Excellency the Governor had left Kumasi and was on his way to Fumsu. For the moment

he could hardly realize it. It had only one meaning. Sir Frederick Hodgson must have made terms of peace with the Ashantis. Were the Adansis included in these peace terms? Colonel Willcocks decided to take no risks. He ordered Lieutenant-Colonel Carter to proceed at once with his command to Fumsu, taking with him all available provisions, medical stores, etc., with instructions to facilitate the passage of His Excellency the Governor to Fumsu. He also gave instructions for a supply of provisions and medical comforts to be at once despatched from Cape Coast Castle and, filling up a telegraph form, he had it cabled to London. Here is a copy of this official telegram:

To the Secretary of State for the Colonies, London.

Cape Coast Castle,
May 31st.

Message received from Lieutenant-Colonel Carter very near the Prah. (Begins.)

Captain Hall is supposed to have entered Kumasi May 26th. By latest reports Governor of Gold Coast and party, with sick and wounded and political refugees, may be expected to arrive at Fumsu by May 30th. They are short of provisions. (Ends.)

I have sent all provisions I could get together by carriers. Major Wilkinson is at Fumsu, where he is joined to-day by Lieutenant-Colonel Carter with troops, which I have purposely concentrated so as to overcome any possible resistance by enemy, reported to be to the north.

If report correct as to Governor of Gold Coast, great improvement in the military situation.

WILLCOCKS.*

* Published in the London papers of June 2, 1900, and on the same date the diary of the father of Captain Hall records:

"This morning the papers all had the Report that Captain Hall has entered Kumasi with a force of three hundred men of the W.A.F.F. If it is true it is a most marvellous achievement. He landed at Cape Coast Castle on May 8th, started for Kumasi on May 12th, and arrived there after fighting at least one severe engagement on the 26th, thus doing the whole business in fourteen days.

"May it all prove true and may he be mercifully preserved and have a safe and happy return to England to enjoy the reward he has no nobly deserved."

Colonel Willcocks, anxious to get in touch with His Excellency the Governor, and to become acquainted with the situation, decided to leave Cape Coast Castle for Prahsu without waiting for the 2,053 Mendi carriers, officially stated to be leaving Sierra Leone on June 4th. Colonel Willcocks, accompanied by his staff and an escort of two companies W.A.F.F. with two maxims and a large number of carriers obtained locally, left Cape Coast Castle on the afternoon of June 4th. The escort, in order to present a smart appearance, were supplied with new uniforms at Cape Coast Castle the day previous.

It may be of interest to record here the first impressions of the jungle forest, written by Captain Biss, one of the officers of the escort.*

"The first day's march—a short one—was through the only country approaching what one might call open that we passed through during the campaign. The next day we struck into the forest belt, three hundred miles wide, which runs along the coast in unbroken similarity. One's first impressions were deceptive; the shade afforded by the foliage was a very welcome protection from the merciless rays of the tropical sun. But how deadly sick one got of it! The gloom and tedium became almost intolerable, and the prospect, which charmed at first, was soon looked at with a feeling akin to disgust. The hushed silence of the forest was maddening, and one felt at times inclined to cry out from a feeling of utter loneliness. Nothing broke the silence of nature but the occasional hoarse scream of some gay-plumed, restless bird by day, and by night the plaintive call of the sloth, like the cry of a woman in pain.

"The bush, so dense on either side that one could neither penetrate nor even see into it more than a yard or two, engendered a sensation of oppression that became appalling. The damp, malarious mist, the monotonous drip of water from the leaves overhead, the fetid mire under foot, the dank, clammy feeling of the atmosphere, the pungent, sickly smell of decaying vegetation, all combined to create loathing and weariness.

* *The Relief of Kumasi*, by Captain H. C. J. Biss (Methuen & Co.).

"The giant cotton and mahogany trees, vast columns lining the forest tracks, were magnificent in themselves, but their endless number blunted all perception of their grandeur. In close proximity have they stood for centuries, amid pools of stagnant, muddy water, united by twining creepers above and never-changing undergrowth below. Close-woven between their trunks a maze of brambles, graceful banana plants, nodding stalks of corn, and stunted timber kept ever sodden by a carpet of rotting leaves. An occasional orchid peeped out between the branches of some silver-tinted stem, scattered clusters of garish scarlet flowers looming through the purple haze of death, but for the rest—an embodiment of sorrowful silence, a never changing sequence of dissatisfaction, a wilderness of superabundance. Does the lover of nature blame one for a dulled appreciation of the beautiful? If so, let him come and experience for himself what month after month of this eternal lack of variation in scenery means. It is the earth brooding moodily, bereft of heaven's bright sun, weeping in darkness for the light.

"To look at this country from a practical point of view does not improve one's opinion of it. The narrow, tortuous track compels a force to move in single file, which makes its length enormous and renders it exceedingly vulnerable. The path in places is next to impassable, since, in the absence of sunshine, there is nothing to dry up the slimy, slippery mud and surface water. At frequent intervals great fallen trees lie across the road, and nobody would believe how such an apparently slight obstacle delays a march, nor what gaps are made in a long column by such checks. It is the most impossible country in which to fight and manœuvre. The only way to extend one's front is for each man to cut his own way through the jungle, which is such a perfect natural ambush that one's nerves are strained to the extremest tension by the knowledge that a murderous fire, at a few yards' range, may be poured into your men at any moment. Is it wonderful, then, that with experience one gets to hate the African 'bush,' as it is rather inappropriately called?"

Such was the beginning of the jungle forest. There were

one hundred and forty-one miles of it before Kumasi was reached, after which it continued on northwards for many many miles.

By the time the column with which Captain Biss was marching had completed three-quarters of the journey to Prahsu, Colonel Willcocks was beginning to get impatient at the slowness of its movement. He was most anxious to get in touch with the Governor. The least he could do was to meet him at Prahsu and so welcome him before he entered the Gold Coast Colony proper, the River Prah at Prahsu being the boundary between Ashanti and the Gold Coast Colony. He therefore hastened on with his staff and F Company with its maxim under Captain C. J. Melliss,* leaving Captain Beddoes with B Company and the maxim to bring on the loaded carriers.

* Lieutenant-General Sir Charles Melliss, V.C., K.C.B., C.S.I.

CHAPTER NINE

A Momentous Palaver

On May 23rd, three days previous to the arrival at Cape Coast Castle of Colonel Willcocks, and with only three days left to save Kumasi, I started from Eginassi at dawn for my momentous palaver at 8 a.m. with the King of Beckwai at his capital.

Moving off with a mobile force consisting of E Company with maxim, half D Company with maxim, one 75-mm. gun, and medical detachment with hammocks, still leaving Captain Beamish with half D Company at Dompuassi and Kwisa held by a garrison under Lieutenant Slater, Amoaful was reached without incident. There a report was received from Esumeja that the Ashantis had made no attempt to move southward from Edjumun. The command was then handed over to Captain Wilson with instructions to have a meal prepared for the men and to be ready to parade again at 10 a.m.

Captain Haslewood, with headquarter escort and myself, then started for Beckwai, which was a mile and a half due west of Amoaful. It was the capital of an area on the west side of the main Cape Coast to Kumasi path, which extended to within eight miles of Kumasi in the north and to Obuassi (the Ashanti Goldfields) in the south. It was inhabited by the most powerful tribe of the Ashanti confederation. The town consisted of two long main streets, intersected at intervals by smaller cross streets. The houses were of the usual Ashanti type, but rather larger and better built. Each house usually consisted of a collection of four small verandahs with walled backs. They thus formed a little court with a small portico all round. The floors were raised about two feet above the ground and the whole stuccoed with a smooth red-coloured cement.

The King and his chiefs exercised considerable influence, and it was their decision to come under the British flag on the approach of the Expeditionary Force four years previously which had led to the British entry into Kumasi being unopposed. The actual ceremony of hoisting the British flag at Beckwai at that time was carried out by Major R. S. S. Baden-Powell with his Adansi levies and a Hausa force. It is interesting to recall here what Lord Baden-Powell says of the occasion in his book, *The Downfall of Prempeh*:

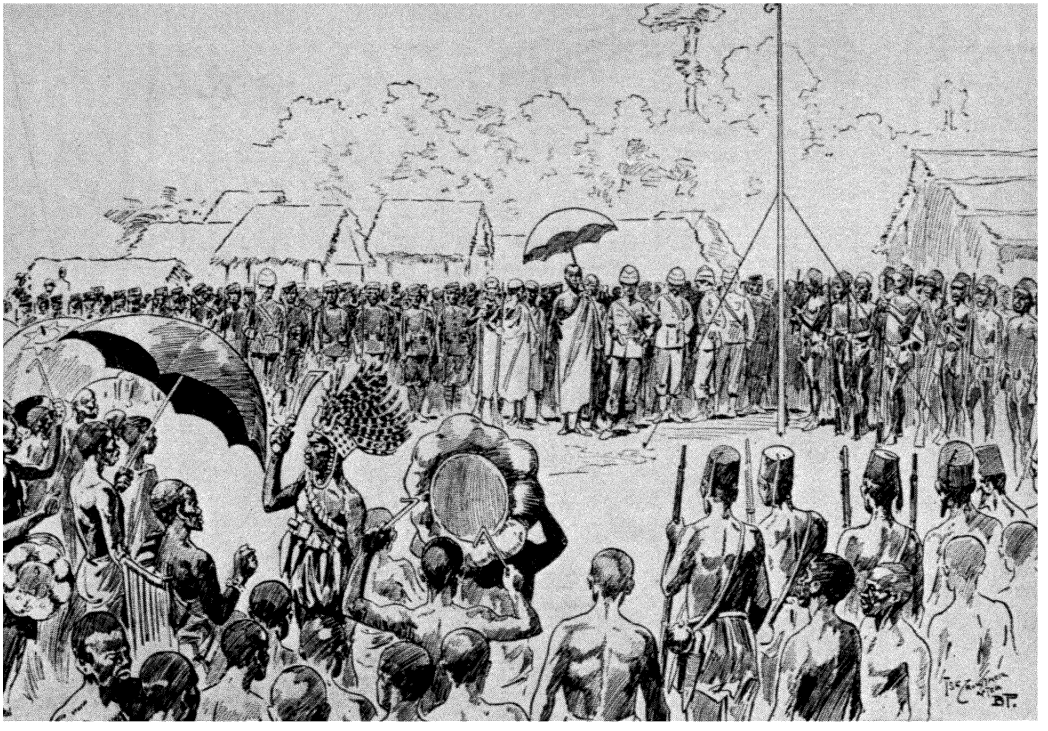
"The morning of January 5, 1896, was devoted to the ceremony of hoisting the British flag, and small as the matter seemed to be at first, it developed into a very impressive function. African monarchs are very hard to hurry, but there was much business to be done, and business on an expedition such as this has to be done quickly. So that, after several messages requesting the King's wishes as to where and when the ceremony of hoisting the flag should take place, I had the staff set up in a spot of my own choosing, paraded my force, and sent to tell the King that all was ready. This had the desired effect in the end, although the guard of honour of Hausas and of the Baden-Powell scouts had some time to wait before the din of drums and horns and the roaring of the crowd told that the royal procession was on the move. Presently it came in sight—a vast black crowd surging and yelling round the biers on which the King and chiefs were borne. Above and around them twirled the great State umbrellas. In front were bands of drummers with small drums, then dancing men who leaped and whirled along, fetish men in quaint headdresses, drummers with kettledrums, trumpeters with their jaw-bedecked ivory horns, and then the great war-drums, carried shoulder high, and hung with skulls, which were, however, for this occasion covered with a strip of cloth, signifying that it was a peace ceremony. There were the King's court criers with their tiny black and white caps, and running before and behind there rushed the crowd of slave boys carrying their masters' stools upon their heads. The roar and the drumming became intense as the procession came rushing up the road—for it moved at a fast pace—and

the umbrellas whirling and leaping gave a great amount of life and bustle to the scene. At last the throne and chairs were set, and the people marshalled by degrees into some kind of order. I then offered to the King the flag with all its advantages, which the King, with much spirit in his words, eagerly accepted; every phrase he used, besides being formally applauded by the chorus of court criers, was evidently fully approved of by the concourse.

"The King then moved from his seat to the flagstaff. Though it was but a few paces, the move involved no small amount of ceremony. The umbrella had to be kept twirling over him while the bearer moved only on the ball of the foot. Men went before to clear every stick and straw from the royal path. The fetish man, in a handsome Red Indian kind of feather headdress and a splendid silver belt, appeared to bless the scene. One man supported the King by holding his waist, and was himself similarly supported by two or three others in succession behind. Another mopped the King with a handkerchief, while boys armed with elephant's tails kept off stray flies from the royal presence. The King was dressed in a kind of patchwork toga with a green silk scarf, on his head a small tortoiseshell cap, and on his wrists, among the pendant fetish charms, he wore some splendid bracelets of rough gold nuggets and human teeth. In all his barbaric splendour the King moved up to the flagstaff. The flag was at the masthead in a ball, and as he pulled the halyard that let it fall out in long gaudy folds, the band of the Hausas struck up 'God Save the Queen,' and the troops presented arms. The King made a gesture of going to sleep, with his head on his hand, and said that under that flag he should remain till he died. The officers of the Hausa force then came up and were introduced to the King. These were Captains Mitchell, Aplin, Middlemist, and Dr. Murray."

Such was the scene four years before, but of these officers, Captain Aplin and Captain Middlemist were at the moment besieged in Kumasi. The tables had been turned with a vengeance!

How different, too, was my entry into Beckwai. We were



Hoisting the Flag at Beckwai

met by an armed party of Beckwais, who conducted us to the palace, where we formed up. It was wet and dreary and our march through the town invoked no enthusiasm, the majority of the inhabitants remaining in their houses.

After a few moments the King and chiefs emerged, in anything but ceremonial costume. We received them with a general salute, and I went up and shook hands, first with the King and then with the chiefs. They all looked extremely grave, and noticing a native dressed in clerical attire smiling at me I went up to him and said, "We have met before. Where?"

"You mistook my missionary hut one night for an Ashanti outpost, four years ago."

"Of course, with my West Yorkshire detachment! You are Mr. Jones. Tell them the story."

He did so in their native language, but by the expression on their faces their thoughts seemed elsewhere. They remained glum. Perhaps it was the story; I will repeat it for what it is worth.

It was on the night of December 31, 1895, that I was on detached duties with the pioneer detachment of the West Yorkshire Regiment. Our instructions were to keep a lookout for any Ashanti outpost, there being considerable rivalry in the Expeditionary Force as to who would be the first to capture an Ashanti. We were led to believe that Ashanti outposts usually occupy an empty hut during the night, and post a sentry outside. Sometimes native wine was secured, in which case by midnight the height of merry-making would be reached and the sentry be with those inside.

The evening in question we halted in a small opening containing three native huts. It looked a tempting place to halt for the night. The detachment was told off to the huts, a sentry was posted, and the hammock boys soon had a fire going and a meal prepared. I turned into my valise and was soon asleep, and awakening about 11.30 p.m. turned out to inspect the sentry. He asked me if I could hear singing; he thought he could. I certainly did. We moved forward along the pathway in the direction of the sound, and round a bend,

sure enough, we saw the glow of a light from a hut. We were back in an instant to give the alarm, the men were awakened, and fell in. The carbines were stacked with a man in charge, the men drew their cutting sword bayonets, and I my revolver, and we stalked forward towards the glow. My last orders were:

"Now, men, here's our chance! Surround the place, capture them alive if you can, and don't move forward till I do."

We spread out, working towards it. I held my breath and advanced along the path. The singing grew louder; nearer and nearer I went, when like a flash a familiar hymn was recognized, and our astonished eyes beheld inside a ring of black children singing the new year in, heartily led by a native missionary.

He seemed unconcerned when I spoke. We all entered and heartily joined in the singing, and never had any of us spent a New Year's Eve under such strange circumstances. The missionary told us all about the work he was carrying on. I asked him if these were Ashantis. He said, "Yes, orphans." Probably their parents had been human sacrifices. He had been carrying on his work under the auspices of a British missionary society.

I told him I would get up a subscription for him if he would come in the morning to visit the regiment with his orphans; so next morning I despatched a note to the adjutant, saying I was bringing in fifteen Ashanti prisoners, and asking him to have the necessary arrangements made.

Starting off with the detachment, Mr. Jones the missionary, and the fifteen Ashantis, I sent a soldier on ahead to keep the secret and warn the battalion of our coming. We found the whole battalion lining the pathway to the camp in great expectancy, and as the Ashanti prisoners approached their look of astonishment grew wider and wider, until it burst into a peal of laughter.

The Commanding Officer came up to me and said, "What's this?"

I said, "A collection, sir, for this Church Mission," and introduced Mr. Jones to all the officers.

We got up a handsome subscription, and here I am back to my interview with the King of Beckwai.

Mr. Jones had turned and whispered to me: "The King is in no mood to appreciate the story. The news is too grave for words; the Ashanti army under Queen Ashantuah is at Kokofu close by!" He added, "The King would like to have a talk with you; will you come inside."

The escort was ordered to fall out and take shelter. Captain Haslewood and I found ourselves seated at a table with the King, his Prime Minister, and Mr. R. G. Jones.

I waited for the King to open the conversation. Through the medium of Mr. Jones as interpreter the King bluntly asked if any more soldiers were coming to Ashanti besides those under my command.

I answered, "Yes, a Field Force under a Big White Colonel, with more guns like the one we had brought along."

"And when would the Big White Colonel arrive at Cape Coast Castle?"

"Three days from now," I replied.

"That means another fortnight before he reaches here."

I nodded, saying, "His advanced troops may be up here before then."

The King then explained his position. He was a loyal friend of England; he wished to remain so. He had given protection to the mining engineers and had done his utmost to keep his people loyal.

After some complimentary remarks I broached the momentous subject of the King's co-operation in the task of saving Kumasi. I unfolded my plan and the more I went into details the more agitated the King became.

With a gesture of his hand for me to stop, the King spoke, and Mr. Jones slowly articulated the words, "Impossible, impossible; the Beckwais would never fight against Queen Ashantuah!" Then, in a subdued voice, Mr. Jones said that there was no power on earth, no bribe or any other inducement, which would cause the Beckwai army to fight against Queen Ashantuah; the only hope lay in keeping that army from joining the rebels, and this the King was trying his best to do.

I asked for a personal appeal to the chiefs. It was of no avail. I saw that to continue the subject would only lead to trouble; so bitterly disappointed I sat in silence, soon to be broken by another question from the King. He wanted to know whether we were going on to Kumasi. I dared not tell the King that Kumasi must be saved in the next three days, so I reminded him that he had written me saying that Kumasi was hard pressed and unless help arrived soon, things would be very bad there; I was therefore going on to Kumasi next day.

My answer evidently upset the King. He remained silent for some moments.

"You will be destroyed," he said finally. "I shall flee, your Big White Colonel with his soldiers will never reach Beckwai."

The King spoke with great solemnity, explaining that if he could not have the protection of the British flag he must flee; he had many enemies within and without. He then warned me that Queen Ashantuah had prepared a trap for us. This trap was that our advance guard was to be held up at Edjumun, while she swooped down on us from Kokofu. As for the Big White Colonel and his soldiers, they must suffer the same fate as Governor McCarthy with his twelve officers and four hundred men many years ago.

I made no reply but asked the King to explain the position of the Abadoms, who had been fighting the Beckwais near Ahuryi. His face became ruffled and he said he had a bitter feud with the King of Abadom.

"They are rebels now, and would most certainly support Queen Ashantuah in attacking your soldiers. They have already looted the mining company at Ahuryi, and if the Europeans had not come to Beckwai they would have been captured and executed."

The King was most anxious that their evil influence should not be brought to bear on his people.

Nothing more was to be gained by continuing the interview; so I asked permission to have a talk with Mr. Jones. The King kindly consented and with his Minister withdrew.

"Now, Mr. Jones," I said, "tell me exactly what the position is."

"Well, sir, you know what happened four years ago. King Prempeh is still in exile; the indemnities due by the Ashantis are still unpaid. This rising is the outcome of it. The Ashantis saw their opportunity and have seized it. It was most unfortunate that the Governor at Kumasi demanded payment of the indemnities and the surrender of the Golden Stool at the very time when things were going so badly in South Africa. It was the culminating point, and now he is besieged and in a desperate position."

A week ago, Mr. Jones told me, he and the Beckwai king thought that the whole affair had blown over and that the Governor and the chiefs had made up their differences. This result seemed to have been brought about by the news of the landing of a large force of black troops of unknown nationalities at Cape Coast Castle, on their way up to help the Governor. The Ashanti chiefs were taken aback by this unexpected turn of events, so decided to make peace before it was too late and lost no time in approaching the Governor, using the loyal Ashanti chiefs still in Kumasi as intermediaries.

The Governor, it appeared, had been using these loyal chiefs to try to arrange terms, but the rebel chiefs, knowing they then had the whip hand, demanded impossible terms. As soon, however, as they learned that a powerful force had started from Cape Coast Castle they made up their minds to accept whatever terms the Governor would offer and requested to be informed what these terms were so that they could formally consider and accept them. An armistice was agreed to and the Beckwai people in Kumasi, who included the King of Beckwai's linguist, were able to keep the King informed, and everybody expected that things would be amicably settled. There seemed to be no doubt whatever that the rebel Ashanti chiefs were not going on with the rebellion. They sent in large stocks of food to the Kumasi market, allowed the besieged populace to come out and get as much food as they wanted, and permitted the column of native troops from the Northern Territories to reach Kumasi and pass through the stockades.

This last was an astounding piece of information to Hasle-

wood and myself for we had heard that Major Morris and his force had been wiped out.

"They would have been wiped out," said Jones, "except for the report of the landing of large forces, and that is why the King of Beckwai, now he knows your force is so small, thinks you will be wiped out too."

We pressed him for more details.

Queen Ashantuah, the Queen-Mother, it appeared, intervened at the last moment. She made an eloquent appeal to the chiefs, pointed out that the Ashantis had never been conquered, and never would be. "You must fight the new soldiers and destroy them; if you won't, I will," she declared. Thus Queen Ashantuah of Ejissu had become the head and moving spirit of the whole rising. Her town, Ejissu, was the fetish capital of Ashanti. She herself was an elderly Queen-Mother with a very great influence, and was held in absolute awe by the chiefs. She ruled everyone and her word was law. The King of Beckwai had told us that she had come down to Kokofu to carry out her threat, and this was confirmed by a note that Jones showed us. It came from Pekki, eight miles from Kumasi. "The man referred to in it," Jones explained, "was in the rebel camp outside Kumasi on May 16th and told me all about it." It was dated May 17, 1900, and read as follows:

DEAR MR. JONES,

I have sent this young man named Yao Beng to come to you please dear father to let me hear some information about the comming soldiers and their capn.

He will also inform you how the enemies determed to do against the B. troops when they passed the main road from Asuminya to Kumasi.

"Thanks," I said. "May I keep it?"

"Certainly."

"Did this young man tell you that the rebel chiefs had heard of our arrival on the Coast in great force?"

"Certainly; that fresh troops were coming up from day to day and each talking a different language. Why, even the King of Beckwai was misled until you came up. That is why he is

so frightened and wants the protection of the whole of your force until the Big Colonel comes. Surely you will protect us, sir?"

Ignoring the question I took out from my pocket a copy of a telegram and read aloud:

Obuassi,
May 16th.

To the Colonial Secretary, Accra.

Messengers from Jones Ashanti Company dated Beckwai fifteenth instant desire me to telegraph the following message to you from the King of Beckwai. The Kokofus who are friendly to the Beckwais have come in saying the King of Adansi had informed rebels surrounding Kumasi that only fifty Hausas were coming up; if troops went to Kumasi to wait for them at Edjumun on main road north of Esumeja. They also report that the King of Abadom has informed rebels that Ahuryi is deserted and that the village and white men's stores are at their mercy. (*Signed*) WEBSTER.

"Now, Mr. Jones," I said, "I saw this telegram at Fumsu on my way to Kwisa six days ago. If the statements made by your namesake are correct, Queen Ashantuah expects only to meet fifty Hausas, and what is there to be afraid of with our much larger force?"

"Good gracious, sir, she knows better. Why, Queen Ashantuah has at this very moment between ten thousand and fifteen thousand fighting men at Kokofu and six thousand at Edjumun. That Adansi message was part of the plan to stop the Ashanti chiefs from accepting the Governor's terms and induce them to come down to Edjumun to fight the big force coming up, which the Adansis hesitated at the last moment to resist themselves. You see, sir, the Adansis had sworn fetish with the Ashantis to join the rising because they believed Captain Aplin's command was the last of the troops on the Gold Coast. They threatened to force the Beckwais to do likewise and would have succeeded had the King of Beckwai not believed that a large force was coming up, and as soon as the Adansis realized this, too, they stayed their hand and called upon the Ashantis to deal with your force at Edjumun. The Adansis have and are still playing a double game. You got the King of Beckwai's

message telling you that the Adansi chief Kwabina Fourey is playing a double game. At Prahsu he talks loyally while his messengers are daily passing to and fro from the rebel camp via Abadom and Kokofu, so you will appreciate, sir, that Queen Ashantuah knows the strength of your force now that it has passed through the Adansi country. I implore you, sir, not to go on until the Big Colonel comes."

"I appreciate all you have told me," I said. "I have entered into a solemn agreement with the Adansis and have got Kwabina Fourey's thumb print and signature on the document all right, so we must hope for the best. Good-bye, Mr. Jones, thanks so much."

The escort was paraded and we started back. The streets were absolutely deserted and there was evidently no enthusiasm for our coming.

On the way back I talked the whole meeting over with Captain Haslewood. The impressions it had left on his mind were that we had succeeded at first in bluffing the rebel chiefs and the Kings of Beckwai and Adansi as to our actual strength, and the fact that the column from the Northern Territories had been allowed to pass into Kumasi was a splendid bit of news. This brought the strength of the garrison there up to twenty-three or twenty-four officers and eight hundred men. Captain Haslewood spoke appreciatively of all the trouble we took in marching and counter-marching, and sending up the various units by nationalities. He said he would not have believed it possible that the rebels would have spotted the different languages. However, the truth of our actual strength was now out, as it was bound to be sooner or later, and both we and the King of Beckwai were in a pretty difficult position. The King of Beckwai believed that if we went on we should be wiped out. If we remained, he feared that his people, now that they knew the smallness of our force, would join Queen Ashantuah.

The situation looked pretty bad all round. Our hopes of aid from the Beckwai army and of getting the additional thousand carriers that we needed had all gone glimmering, and there was no possibility of Colonel Willcocks turning up

in time. The one good feature was the unexpected increase in the garrison at Kumasi, and with this in mind I asked Haslewood what he thought of the chances of the Governor, with the white ladies and the civil population, making a successful break-out on May 26th without our aid. He had no encouragement to offer; the odds against it were too great.

So here we were. We had got to help the Governor, and there were three days left to do it in. I wished Sir Garnet Wolseley had the job!

I thought for some time, and then told Haslewood, as soon as we got to Amoaful, to send an order by runner to Captain Beamish at Dompuassi to move forward at once to Eginassi, taking every precaution to guard his right flank. He was to remain at Eginassi and report his arrival to me at Esumeja, where the rest of the command would be concentrated. In the use of his carriers he was to give first consideration to ammunition, which was urgently required for Kumasi, and he was to inform Officer Commanding Kwisa of his move to Eginassi. I emphasized that in the despatch of convoys northwards from Kwisa the strongest possible escort should be provided.

On approaching Amoaful we found Captain Wilson waiting with the parade ready to move off.

I told him that the news was serious; that the Ashanti army had come down in force to attack us and we must move on to Esumeja at once.

One of the native Intelligence Service was waiting to see me, and we interviewed him at once. He had been in a small Beckwai village. He heard the villagers talking about the arrival of our soldiers on the way to Kumasi. He heard a native say that there was going to be a fight to-morrow, and the Beckwais would drink fetish with the Kumassis.

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"The enemy at Edjumun are going to wait for you there," he said, "but the big enemy is at Kokofu. They say they will kill you to-morrow. The Abadoms say they will fight you, too; the Beckwais will then be rebels."

"All right," I told him; "try and find out more about the big enemy and let me know to-night at Esumeja."

It was now 11 a.m. The convoy we had sent on to Esumeja that morning had not yet returned, so Colour-Sergeant Mackenzie, with half D Company, was detailed to remain and see that all the stores, etc., now stacked at Amoaful were brought to Esumeja that evening. The remainder of the command then commenced its three and a half mile march northwards to Esumeja.

We met the empty convoy. The native Sergeant-Major in command reported that he had handed over the stores and boxes of ammunition at Esumeja.

"Quite right," I said. "You will find Colour-Sergeant Mackenzie waiting for you at Amoaful. We have brought along all the boxes of ammunition, and if the carriers are not sufficient to bring up everything, the soldiers are to carry the bags of rice. I must have everything up to-night at Esumeja. The Ashantis have come down to fight us."

"Yaas, sir," he answered, and saluting he moved on.

It was a big business for the convoy and our column to pass each other. The jungle forest was particularly dense here. The sturdy Hausas, carrying the 75-mm. gun, required every inch of the pathway, and they were groaning and slipping in their endeavours to keep going. A fall would have meant death or a broken limb from the heavy pieces of the gun they were carrying on their heads.

Plodding onwards, after about an hour we came upon a sentry, a Lagos Hausa. Close by was the picquet. Then came a clearing in the forest. This was Esumeja. We passed about a dozen Ashanti huts on each side of the path, occupied by soldiers, then a little open space. We halted.

Coming down the inclined path from a European Rest House in front of us, we saw Captain Anderson, Lieutenant Edwards,* Dr. Barker, and a stranger. Greetings were exchanged and the stranger introduced. He was Mr. Claude Dahne, a mining surveyor, one of the party who had sought shelter in Beckwai and who wrote me the letters of May 20th and 22nd for the King of Beckwai. He had come down to Esumeja with his surveying instruments and luggage to see if

* Brigadier-General W. F. S. Edwards, C.M.G., D.S.O.



The impenetrable forest around Esumeja

he could be of any help and volunteered for service in any capacity. I gladly accepted his help; his knowledge of the locality would be invaluable.

I then walked round with Captain Anderson, discussing details of billeting and defence. He pointed out certain defensive measures, saying, "There is nothing very elaborate, as I take it you will be going on to Kumasi to-morrow or next day. I also hear from Mr. Dahne that we shall have a fight at Edjumun."

Continuing our tour of inspection, which only took a very short time, I noticed quite a number of felled cotton-trees around the edge of the clearing, which was some three or four acres in extent and under cultivation.

If one stood on the eminence by the Rest House and faced south, one would observe the path inclining downwards to a 75-mm. gun on its carriage and wheels, a party of native gunners round it, a group of British N.C.O.s, and a long line of soldiers and carriers with their loads, standing or sitting between the group of huts about eighty yards away. This line continued southward into the forest for some little distance, and the path eventually led to Kwisa, 18 miles away, then Prahsu, 50 miles away, and finally to Cape Coast Castle, 126 miles away, where Colonel Willcocks was expected to land in three or four days' time. To the right and left of the central path, and beyond a group of native huts, were cultivated spaces for the villagers, with a path to the east leading to Kokofu. The central path, bending round to behind the Rest House, continued northward for three miles to Edjumun, and thence another eleven miles to Kumasi.

Glancing all round one could not help noticing the commanding position of this Rest House. It dominated all the paths; but both it and the whole enclosure were themselves dominated by an impenetrable wall of jungle and enormous forest trees, which gave the place a very depressing effect, and made one long to be out of it.

The distribution of the new arrivals was then taken in hand. The officers to the Rest House, the 75-mm. gun, with R.A. detachment and Sergeant Griggs, R.A., to the outbuildings

on the eminence, E Company to the huts on the east side of the path, the Lagos Hausas and S.L.F.P. to those on the west side, the carriers being allotted a special compound and the British N.C.O.s a special hut.

After a meal and a rest the whole force was paraded for inspection, units allotted to defensive posts, an extended outpost line taken up, and men and officers detailed for the various night duties.

Shortly afterwards Colour-Sergeant Mackenzie arrived with the convoy from Amoaful. He had got everything away. This arrival taxed Esumeja to its utmost capacity. It was quite impossible to find shelter from the rain for anything like the number; so light structures, about four feet high, covered with green palm leaves, were run up on the cultivated portions to give some kind of shelter, and the occupants obtained what warmth they could from their smouldering fires alongside.

Captain Haslewood was extremely busy checking the stores and seeing that they were properly stacked and the bags of rice put under cover. He came up and asked if we were going on to-morrow or next day as he wished to get the orders out.

I told him I was waiting to see the Native Intelligence first, and asked if the man had come in.

"Oh, yes," he said, "I had a long talk with him. Queen Ashantuah is at Kokofu all right; the man says there are five big camps there and a large contingent from the Achimas."

I told Haslewood to get the orders out to be ready to move off for Kumasi at dawn. "Make no secret of it," I added, "and when you have finished doing the work come and have a talk with me and I will let you know some more."

CHAPTER TEN

A Ruse and an Inspiration

THE Beckwais had failed us. A terrible situation had developed. I was stumped this time and no doubt about it.

I sat down on a seat in the Rest House to think out matters. Indeed, it was a puzzler. The King wanted the protection of the whole of my force. If not, he meant to bolt and another ten thousand men would go over to the enemy. That was definite enough, as was the information of the close proximity at Edjumun and Kokofu of Ashantis in very great strength, so placed that it would appear that we had walked into a rat-trap at Esumeja, and if we tried to escape they were ready to pounce on us and complete the massacre. We had, however, to go through with it. We had to get out of the rat-trap at all costs; otherwise we should be compelled to be on the defensive at Esumeja, with the result that within twenty-four hours we should be besieged and surrounded with a ring of stockades as Kumasi was. How long would it be before the King went, the Beckwais were up, and every Ashanti a rebel, while Kumasi and ourselves would be more securely bolted than ever and the Expeditionary Force have to fight every inch of their way up?

I went out and had a talk with Mr. Dahne about the immediate locality. He told me that Edjumun was about three miles north of Esumeja and on the direct path to Kumasi. Kokofu, where Ya Ashantuah, Queen of Ejissu, generally called Queen Ashantuah and leader of the rebellion, was, was 3,100 yards east-south-east of Esumeja. About half a mile along the path from Esumeja to Kokofu a cross path ran north and south, the northern portion being practically parallel with

the main path from Esumeja to Edjumun and about half a mile distant from it. Another three-quarters of a mile from the cross paths, along the Esumeja-Kokofu path, was a small village and five hundred yards farther on was Kokofu itself.

It was not difficult to see that the Ashantis coming from Kokofu, on reaching this cross path, would turn northwards until they were in position opposite to where they knew our column would be marching when the head of it was attacked at Edjumun. The Ashantis would then advance through the forest towards the flank of the column and pour out on to the main path in their thousands. I could well imagine the fate of our carriers and soldiers having to run this gauntlet, and could see what the King of Beckwai had meant when he told us that Queen Ashantuah would swoop down and destroy us if we went on.

There was the choice of these two evils, either to remain at Esumeja and be besieged or attempt to run this gauntlet. The former would mean death to all those in Kumasi, while the latter would mean our annihilation and that of Kumasi too.

One ray of hope of getting to Kumasi flashed across my mind. I grasped at it. It almost took my breath away at the thought that it might be possible. Yes, I might avoid the gauntlet. I could either attack the smaller force at Edjumun and be attacked by the larger force from Kokofu, that was, run the gauntlet, or I could attack the larger force at Kokofu and be attacked by the smaller force from Edjumun. The Ashantis would expect the former course; I would carry out the latter, and, if successful, counter-attack the weaker force and push through to Kumasi.

I broached my surprise scheme to Captain Haslewood. It was on no account to be divulged to anyone, as it was conditional on success being obtained at Kokofu and the enemy force at Edjumun moving south to attack Esumeja. I then gave him the details of the plan which was to be carried out the following morning. The cross paths on the Kokofu path half a mile from Esumeja were to be occupied by dawn by our troops. An advance guard, followed by a line of loaded carriers, was to be halted at dawn a little way along the main path to

Edjumun, so that the Ashanti spies would be able to report that we were starting off for Kumasi. This would, of course, be only a feint, and the advance guard and carriers would be withdrawn to Esumeja as soon as the Kokofu column came into action, it being contemplated that the Ashantis at Edjumun, on hearing the firing, would move southwards to attack Esumeja.

"Will you therefore," I said, "please instruct Captain Anderson to detail half a company of Lagos Hausas and Lieutenant Edwards his maxim gun for the defence of Esumeja. I want you to take command at Esumeja. Keep an eye on the carriers in case they are wanted and in touch with the cross paths, where I shall leave half a company with a maxim to cover our retirement and support you if attacked until our counter-stroke is delivered. By the way," I added, "I have not heard from Beamish."

"Oh, an escort brought in the report all right, I forgot to mention it. Beamish asked for instructions to be sent back by the escort."

"Good," I said. "This leads me to the subsidiary operation. You will remember that the King of Beckwai told us that the Abadoms would join in the attack on us to-morrow, and that he and the King of Abadom have a personal feud, which I think it admissable to take advantage of, and, besides, the King of Beckwai told us that the Abadoms should be punished for looting the mining camp at Ahuryi. Please, therefore, write out two sets of instructions to be sent by this escort. Inform the King of Beckwai, on hearing the sound of our firing, to co-operate with his armed force and support Captain Beamish at Eginassi in resisting the anticipated attack of the Abadoms. Should this attack not mature, the Beckwais are to attack Abadom and recover the stolen property of the mining company. Instruct Beamish, in view of the operations for to-morrow, to render support to the Beckwais without jeopardizing his own safety and to hold Eginassi until further instructions are sent him to garrison Esumeja on our advance to Kumasi."

Leaving Captain Haslewood to his office routine, I went

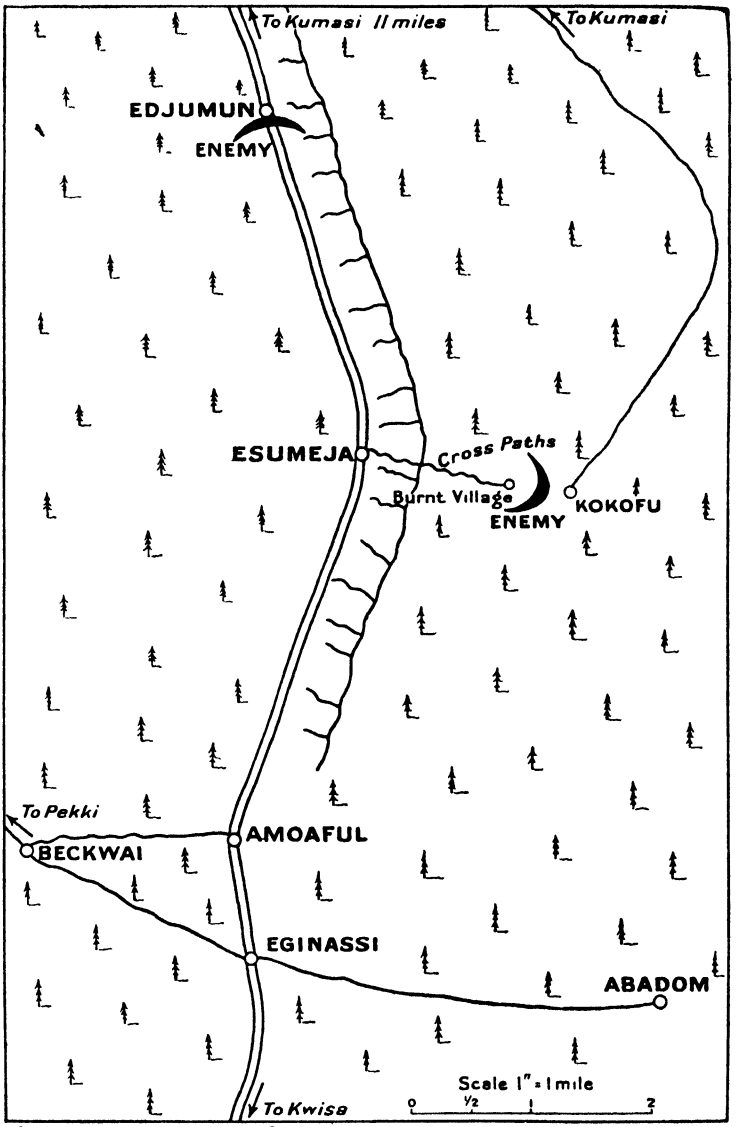
outside the Rest House to have a last look round. The rain had ceased, the little fires were still smouldering, and in the far distance in the direction of Kokofu the faint sounds of war drumming could be heard.

An hour before dawn on May 24th found everybody preparing to take up their allotted duties. The first to move off were the S.L.F. Police, under Lieutenant Edwards. They had literally to probe their way to the cross paths before they could take up their position. They were followed by E Company 1st W.A.F.F. with one maxim, under Captain Wilson, with Colour-Sergeant Humphries. Then in succession the R.A. detachment under Sergeant Griggs, with the 75-mm. gun, escorted by half D Company 1st W.A.F.F. with one maxim, under Colour-Sergeant Mackenzie, then medical detachment with hammocks under Dr. Barker, with Staff-Sergeant Payne, R.A.M.C., and finally the rearguard of a half company of Lagos Hausas, under Captain G. Anderson.

While these movements were in progress Captain Haslewood had despatched an advance guard of Lagos Hausas, with a string of loaded carriers, along the main path towards Edjumun, posted the maxim gun on the eminence outside the Rest House, and distributed the Lagos Hausas to defensive posts.

Dawn found the force for Kokofu drawn up at the cross paths, facing east. It had taken us nearly an hour to do this half-mile. It was no easy task. The path was almost obliterated by thick undergrowth, and it became necessary to clear it with machetes before the gun detachment could be got along, and so dense was the jungle on our side of the cross paths that no attempt was made to mount the gun on its carriage, but the two maxims were concealed to command the path coming from the direction of Kokofu.

It was broad daylight before our serenity was disturbed by a signal gun in the direction of our left rear. This was followed by another signal gun in our front. This was taken to be giving warning of the feint from Esumeja towards Edjumun and was followed by the sudden appearance round the bend of the path from Kokofu of armed Ashantis, running along the path towards us. The leader spotted us, stopped, and with those



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following soon formed a good objective for our concealed machine gun, which immediately opened fire, scattering the Ashantis to both sides of the path. Their advance was checked and, before they had time to recover themselves, the S.L.F.P. had poured in several more rounds, causing the Ashantis to retire precipitately.

A general advance was then ordered the S.L.F.P. covering the front, and E Company both flanks. Good progress was made and the half D Company with one maxim, under Colour-Sergeant Mackenzie, was ordered to remain in position at the cross paths to cover our return and frustrate any southerly movement of the Ashantis from Edjumun. The S.L.F.P. were working the dense bush splendidly and driving all before them, until a clearing containing a small village was reached. This was found to be strongly held and the enemy opened a heavy fire. The 75-mm. gun was brought up, mounted on its carriage, and opened fire. Its effect was magical, the Ashantis scattering like rabbits into the jungle. We entered the village and passed through it. We were now only five hundred yards from Kokofu, and, after working the bush on both sides of the path for about two hundred yards, we were suddenly met by a roar of Dane guns all along our front. We halted; we could see nothing. Whenever a volley was fired by us at the unseen enemy, it was answered by an all-round roar of Dane guns. The 75-mm. gun was brought into action again and a round of shrapnel fired. There was an ominous silence, then a sudden outburst of Dane guns, in even greater volume than before. Whenever a particularly noisy sector was located a round of shrapnel was fired, followed by the ominous silence; then a sharp outburst of Dane guns extending on both sides further to our rear.

After half an hour the firing on both sides had so thinned out the foliage that we could discern the enemy running forward to fire their Dane guns and removing their dead and wounded. We were now able to do greater execution and for an hour and a half we held all the enemy's efforts to advance. There seemed no disposition on their part to relax their attacks, and it was obvious that the Ashantis were in con-

siderable force, quite in keeping with the numbers that Mr. Jones had mentioned.

The native soldiers were behaving splendidly and seemed quite confident, but we were not making progress and were using up a considerable amount of ammunition. It was therefore obvious that the whole of the reserves, namely half D Company and the half Company Lagos Hausas must be brought up, and under cover of a sustained bombardment by the 75-mm. gun, a general assault must be made by the whole force, numbering in all two hundred and sixty-four of all ranks. This might or might not have had the desired result of capturing and burning Kokofu, but it would have involved, against such overwhelming odds, a heavy list of casualties and the expenditure of a large amount of sorely needed ammunition. There was a far greater danger involved in this course, for if the reserves guarding the cross paths were called up, not only would our safety be jeopardized but all hope of saving the Governor and of Colonel Willcocks ever getting up would vanish. The six thousand Ashantis at Edjumun, not seeing our arrival there and hearing the firing, would be moving southwards to attack Esumeja, which could have only one result—Esumeja captured, the King of Beckwai bolting, and the Beckwais becoming rebels.

Assuming this risk was taken, the reserves brought up, and Kokofu captured and burned, all this must take time, and time was the pressing factor. No, it would be madness to do it; but a saving of many casualties and of sorely needed ammunition could be made if, instead of carrying out the general assault on Kokofu and burning it, we set fire to the place with the incendiary shells of the 75-mm. gun from the position which we were now holding. This would be the common-sense point of view and would gain the moral effect.

I was about to give an order to carry this out when a sudden inspiration came upon me. If, instead of burning or capturing Kokofu we could keep Queen Ashantuah and her army there, it would be the means of solving the problem of helping the Governor and protecting the Beckwais. With our return to Esumeja, Queen Ashantuah would realize that her own *coup*

de main had failed, and so long as we remained at Esumeja and maintained an active defence there, Queen Ashantuah would either have to defend Kokofu or bring disgrace on herself by deserting the place. This inspiration offered the best solution and I acted on it.

I could see that the enemy in front of us were by no means happy. They must have suffered very heavy casualties. They were now half-hearted in their rush forwards to fire their Dane guns, obviously fearing to expose themselves; so, after seeing that our wounded, including Lieutenant Edwards and Sergeant Griggs, were placed in hammocks, and with a final burst of shrapnel fire the order to withdraw was given and the force returned to Esumeja, the enemy making no attempt to follow us up, and we reached Esumeja unmolested at 11.30 a.m.

A visit was made to the wounded in the temporary hospital, and then to the Rest House to deal with and write reports. The first was one from Captain Beamish at Eginassi. The King of Beckwai had sent an armed contingent for Abadom, and our troops supported them. They found the Abadom fighting men absent; so the population was driven out, much of the loot of the mining company recovered, and the place burnt. Captain Beamish was unable to state whether the Abadom fighting men had gone to Kokofu or elsewhere.

In reply I wrote to Captain Beamish that we had found the Ashanti army in force at Kokofu and that I had decided to remain at Esumeja for the present and he must stay at Eginassi. He was requested to send up to Esumeja next day a convoy of stores with a strong escort. I also informed him that I was writing for another palaver with the King of Beckwai and would then come on to Eginassi. In the meantime he should send back for more stores from Kwisa.

The next letter was to the King of Beckwai, thanking him for sending the armed contingent to Abadom and saying that I would come in to Beckwai on May 26th for another palaver with him at 11 a.m. that day.

I next wrote a despatch on the morning's operations. I did not deem it advisable to disclose the inspiration scheme which

might never mature, as a reason for my withdrawal, but merely recorded, "We successfully held them for over an hour from outflanking us, but could not advance."* Neither could I disclose my present intention of covering the Governor's retirement by holding the Ashanti army to Kokofu, for it was by no means certain that it would or could be carried out, and that a forward move to Kumasi would not have to be made after all. One fact was definitely established, and that was that if Kumasi was to be saved and Colonel Willcocks's command to reach Beckwai, protection must be given to the Beckwais and their army prevented from joining the rebels. This could only be done by carrying out an active defence at Esumeja. The next two days would decide whether it was to be the inspiration scheme or a forlorn hope to reach Kumasi; so I ended up my despatch in the following words:

"I am now of opinion that a further advance of the small force would only add to the difficulties of the main column, as the strong force at Kokofu is a standing menace, and the rebels will have to be dispersed before an advance can be made; again, the position we hold admits of the concentration of a large force which could advance on Kumasi by three distinct routes. I have therefore decided to hold Esumeja and form an advance depot here to keep the lines of communication open and to await news of the advance of the main column"

* Official Despatches of the campaign, published in the *London Gazette*, December 4, 1900, stated: "Captain Hall (West Yorkshire Regiment), W.A.F.F., with some four hundred men attacked Kokofu, but being opposed by vast numbers of the enemy was unable to capture it; his troops behaved well, but he was attempting a task which more than double the numbers were unable to effect later."

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Carrying out the Inspiration

THE real business had now begun and only two days left to do it in. It was Queen Victoria's birthday, and we celebrated it by wondering what Queen Ashantuah would do. Would she close in on Esumeja from Kokofu and Edjumun or wait and see what we did?

All that afternoon we waited for her. Strict instructions had been given that no visible defences were to be constructed; it was vital to maintain an active defence, so the large cotton-trees already lying on the outer fringe of the clearing were utilized as shelter trenches. The 75-mm. gun was cunningly concealed in an outbuilding on the eminence, where was also concealed a maxim gun. Another maxim was placed in the southernmost hut into an elongated slit in the mud wall, commanding the southern fringe and path, and the third maxim was kept in reserve. There was thus no outward appearance that the place had been prepared for defence.

The textbooks I knew laid down, and any general would have insisted on, constructing a palisaded stockade round the huts, the Rest House, and the space connecting them, but my experience in West Africa of the psychology of the natives had taught me that they are like the savage dog. The natives, with the knowledge that one has no fear of them, will never attack; they expect to be attacked. So with the dog; if one points a stick at him and holds it there, he will never attack; if one walks or runs away, he certainly will.

By evening our scouts had reported no signs of the Ashantis moving southwards from Edjumun, or towards Esumeja from

Kokofu, but enemy scouts were extremely active and withdrawing at once whenever located.

An hour before dawn next morning, May 25th, the command was in position to meet an attack either from Edjumun or from Kokofu. On neither front did the enemy put in an appearance; so at 8 a.m. E Company, under Captain Wilson, with its maxim gun, was sent forward to make a feint attack on Kokofu. The half D Company under Colour-Sergeant Mackenzie followed in support and to cover the withdrawal. Within a few minutes the boom of an enemy gun rang out, followed by a second farther away. These were obviously warning signals to Kokofu.

For fully half an hour there was an ominous silence; then came a continuous roar of distant firing. It was most awe-inspiring and weird, the boom of the Dane guns contrasting vividly with the volleys of our carbines and the pip-pip-pip of the maxim. To us listening the clean volley firing and the rhythm of the maxim gun were like champagne, for it showed that a perfect fire discipline was being maintained in spite of a very heavy enemy fire. After an interval of about fifteen minutes the firing began to die down and then ceased altogether. Twenty minutes later the smiling faces of the returning soldiers told their own story. We had only suffered three casualties.

A few minutes' conversation with Captain Wilson convinced me that the Ashantis were in great strength at Kokofu and that Queen Ashantuah was determined to defend the place. Was it because she knew we would go on to Kumasi and enter her trap when she could successfully retaliate? This great concentration at Kokofu in itself released the pressure on Kumasi, but how were we to avoid Queen Ashantuah's trap, and if we failed how was the Governor with the civil population of Kumasi to get through it in their attempt to reach Prahsu, the Governor distinctly stating that "unless relieved by May 26th he must endeavour to force a passage through to Prahsu"?

A convoy arrived in the afternoon from Eginassi, but no communication about the main column. This was most disap-

pointing as I had at Prahsu impressed on those in authority the importance of knowing the strength and movements of the main column so as to facilitate my own movements. There was only one day left and a decision one way or the other must be made. I could see only one possible solution. Stop the Governor from coming out for the time being. But how was this to be done? There was nothing for it but to take the Governor at his word that if we did not arrive next day, May 26th, he would make his attempt to break out at or before dawn the following morning. I therefore decided to defer my course of action until I had seen the King of Beckwai in the morning. There would still be time to act. Having made this decision I turned in, to be ready before dawn to make another reconnaisance towards Kokofu, before starting off for my interview with the King of Beckwai.

Parading at dawn with a strong mixed detachment, I proceeded to the cross paths on the way to Kokofu. There, finding the jungle forest as far as the burnt village clear of the enemy, I decided to explore along the path leading towards Kumasi which ran parallel with the path from Esumeja to Edjumun and Kumasi and about half a mile distant from it. Taking a strong patrol with me and with flankers out on the Kokofu side, we proceeded cautiously, and finding all clear continued for some distance. We found at intervals small bush paths leading in the direction of the Esumeja–Kumasi path. By this means an enemy assembled along the path where we were standing could advance in separate columns simultaneously towards the Esumeja–Kumasi path, and withdraw or advance independently of each other. I now realized to the full the danger we had escaped on May 24th, for however much reconnoitring to the flank we made, had we started the enemy had only to withdraw along these small paths as we approached, and to move forward again to deliver their attacks on the most vulnerable part of the column.

It was along this identical Cape Coast to Kumasi path that the Ashantis had planned in 1895 to attack the British Expeditionary Force under Sir Francis Scott. This attack did not mature owing to the disorganization caused by the King of

Beckwai seeking and obtaining the protection of the British flag at the very last moment.

I could not, however, resist the temptation to meditate on what might have happened had the King of Beckwai not gone over to the British and the Ashanti attack actually taken place.

I was with the Column at the time. We took up a total length of over nine miles. First came Baden-Powell's native levies. There were eight hundred and sixty of them, followed by two companies of Gold Coast Hausas and maxim. Then two small detachments, one of the 2nd West Yorkshire Regiment under my command, and another of the composite battalion under Captain Bruce Hamilton.* These composed the advance guard.

After an interval came the Special Service Corps, a composite battalion, under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel F. Stopford,† made up of units of various regiments, including the Guards, each unit consisting of twenty-five men and one officer, all picked men. Behind them two guns and one maxim, with R.A. detachment. Colonel Sir Francis Scott, the Headquarters Staff, and half Bearer Company with hammocks and carriers followed. Then came six companies 2nd West Yorkshire Regiment, under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel A. J. Price. Then two guns and two rockets, with R.A. detachment, and half Bearer Company, with hammocks and carriers. Then the Ammunition column, the Baggage column, the Supply column, and the Field Hospital, with their twelve thousand native carriers, with one company 2nd West India Regiment distributed by half-sections amongst them.

The rearguard was formed of two companies 2nd West Yorkshire Regiment under Captain H. Walker and Lagos Hausas with maxim.

These troops were all moving in single file and wearing, for the last time on active service, their scarlet uniforms.

I could almost picture, from the spot where I was now standing, the subdued excitement of the fifteen or twenty

* General Sir Bruce Hamilton, G.C.B., K.C.V.O.

† Lieutenant-General Hon. Sir Frederick Stopford, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., K.C.V.O.

thousand Ashantis extended for several miles along this parallel path, separated by half a mile of thick jungle forest from the main path along which the British Expeditionary Force were beginning to pass in single file, and were being watched by the Ashanti scouts at the head of the various cross paths. The Ashantis would have had an accurate knowledge of the distribution of the troops and carriers in the nine-mile length of column, and would be in position to deliver their attack when the head of the British column reached the appointed spot, made known to the Ashantis by the firing of a signal Dane gun.

Our fighting units would then be opposite those cross paths, held by the Ashantis, instructed to use their Dane guns at extreme range from treetops and other positions. The Ashantis were experts in judging the exact distance to lob the missiles from their Dane guns which caused painful and, at times, extremely dangerous and fatal wounds, and be themselves comparatively safe from the low trajectory bullets of carbines fired into the dense jungle at an unseen enemy.

The weakest part of the column, namely the ammunition, the supply, the field hospital, and the baggage columns, with their twelve thousand unarmed native carriers, extending in single file for some five to six miles, would be opposite those cross paths where the main Ashanti army was concentrated, with instructions to get to close quarters with their Dane guns, kill, capture, or disperse the unfortunate carriers, seize and destroy what they could, and then direct their attention to the fighting units already in action. Colonel Sir Francis Scott would be faced with not only the problem of defending himself, but, having regard to the difficult position in which he would now find himself, must either halt and bivouac or abandon everything for lack of carriers to bring anything along.

The Expeditionary Force could not go on to Kumasi without their food supply and reserve ammunition. They would certainly not retire; so there was no other alternative but to halt and bivouac, attend to their wounded, and be prepared to resist innumerable attacks.

My meditations on the fate of the Expeditionary Force were cut short by the realization that the Ashanti army was in actual being close by, and the sooner we got back to the cross paths the better.

We found the detachment awaiting us and returned to Esumeja in good time to start off again with Captain Haslewood and the headquarters escort for our palaver with the King of Beckwai.

On nearing Beckwai we were met by armed Beckwais and conducted to the Palace, where the escort was allowed to fall out and Captain Haslewood and I entered the Council room. Seated at the table were the King, his Prime Minister, and Mr. R. Jones, the native missionary. They all rose, we saluted, and took our seats at the table. Mr. Jones again acted as interpreter.

I began by asking Mr. Jones to thank the King for sending his Beckwai contingent to Abadom and for recovering some of the things looted from the mining camp at Ahuryi. The King bowed and then spoke. He referred to the fight at Kokofu. He congratulated us on our escape and said Queen Ashantuah was very angry with us and with him also. She had rightly guessed who had warned us of her trap and never expected us to attack her in the way we had done. She had suffered very heavy casualties and lost some important chiefs. She meant to have her revenge on both of us and the King implored me to be very careful as the old lady was very determined, and it was so difficult for an Ashanti to refuse to come to her help when she called upon him. It meant the most cruel of all punishments, the fetish of human sacrifice. The King went on to tell me that more soldiers had landed at Cape Coast Castle and some of them had reached Prahsu. Then, in a subdued whisper, he added that Queen Ashantuah had learned that too, for he had just heard she was moving the Ashantis holding Edjumun to Kokofu, and was calling for further help. The King proceeded to explain that this was being done to tempt us on to Kumasi or, if we did not do so, to destroy us at Esumeja before the Big White Colonel could get up with his soldiers. Then in a sudden outburst the King exclaimed:

"The White Captain must see my own terrible position!"

I said nothing and felt sorry for the King, but made a mental note that here was a possibility of co-operating with the Governor if he kept his word and came out. I then broached the subject of getting a message into Kumasi. The King shook his head and, taking a packet out of his pocket, handed it to me saying:

"Here is a communication Mr. Webster at Obuassi has asked me to get to Kumasi. My last messenger was captured; I can do nothing more, so I hand it over to you."

Opening it I saw that it was in code, so no information could be obtained from it. I therefore told the King it might be very important and pressed him to reconsider his decision and let me have a messenger that day.

Back came the reply: "Impossible to-day, but I will do my best to get you messengers."

"Does Kumasi know of our arrival at Esumeja and the fight we had at Kokofu?"

The King nodded and explained that his linguist and twenty Beckwais were still in Kumasi. They were in touch from time to time with his people at Pekki, who knew of the plan to attack us after leaving Esumeja. They would therefore be awaiting the result and knew it, so would most probably his people in Kumasi, as the news would be spread about from mouth to mouth.

I told Mr. Jones that it was most important that I should be kept informed of what was going on around Kumasi, requesting him to ask his friend at Pekki who wrote to him that note of May 17, which he kindly allowed me to keep, to report at once the slightest signs of anything special happening. Mr. Jones promised to do this and to write me next day in any case.

I raised the question of establishing a market for the supply of food to the troops at Esumeja, as I considered it imperative to conserve our rice rations for the Kumasi garrison and eventualities. To my delight the King jumped at the idea. He evidently saw in it the answer which was uppermost in his thoughts. His face showed it. We must be remaining at

Esumeja and he would have ample warning whether to flee or not.

Captain Haslewood and I rose and departed, leaving the King with his happy thought. I, too, had my own happy thought. So Queen Ashantuah is going to tempt me on to Kumasi. The temptation shall be taken, I can promise her.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Silence and a Challenge

CAPTAIN HASLEWOOD and I spent half the night in working out the details of next morning's operations. He and Colour-Sergeant Mackenzie with the half D Company were to have the honour of meeting the Governor, my job being to keep the Ashanti army at Kokofu while the Governor and the non-Ashanti population of Kumasi, numbering something like four thousand, and forming a column four to five miles in length, were passed along to Prahsu.

On our return to Esumeja, after visiting the King of Beckwai and Captain Beamish, to the latter of whom I had given instructions to move up with his unit as soon as he heard the 75-mm. gun fire the first round, we lost no time in putting the King's statement about the evacuation of Edjumun to the test! We sent out scouts and patrols in all directions. By nightfall it was established that all the Ashanti scouts had been withdrawn, and but for the fact that the Ashanti army were found to be intact at Kokofu, one would have imagined that the idea of Ashantis in the neighbourhood was a myth. The absence of war drumming at Kokofu only added to it.

The plan of operations depended for its success on team work and rapid intercommunication by the only means available, namely gun signals and runners. It was practically certain that the attempt to leave Kumasi would be made at or before dawn, and, granting success, the column might be expected to reach Edjumun in four hours. Scouts well forward and supported by relays from Edjumun would let the Governor know of our presence and give warning to Captain Haslewood when the exodus was coming along. His instructions were to

halt on our side of Edjumun, send forward the scouts, and to be prepared to return to Esumeja the moment he heard our warning signal of the 75-mm. gun.

The idea I was working on was that enemy scouts would report to Queen Ashantuah that a strong patrol of ours had discovered that Edjumun was evacuated. The patrol had halted to let Esumeja know that there were no Ashantis at Edjumun or for many miles nearer Kumasi; now was our chance of getting there. This would be what Queen Ashantuah would be hoping for. I pictured her clapping her hands with delight and saying to herself, "They are going on to Kumasi, we shall drink fetish with the Beckwais to-morrow; the more the merrier shut up in Kumasi, and the new soldiers coming up shall have it hot."

Not this time, my lady. By the time you get the news of the real state of affairs we shall have the exodus on us, or even passed through, while to deal with you we shall have the welcome reinforcement of seven to eight hundred soldiers under some twenty British officers who came out from Kumasi.

The chances were indeed bright and it was with these thoughts that under cover of darkness Captain Haslewood slipped away with my best wishes for his success.

It was not to be that day. All was quiet and serene, and Edjumun was found evacuated; but the Governor had made no attempt to leave Kumasi. There was nothing for it but to defer the hope to the following day, May 28th. The original plan had, however, to be modified owing to a threatening situation developing in our rear. I received a note from Mr. Jones warning me that trouble was brewing. The rebels were exercising considerable pressure on the Beckwais to join them and they had even gone so far as to threaten some of the villagers on the Adansi border if they did not do so.

This was followed by another note, this time from Mr. Charles L. Ashby, one of the Europeans who sought shelter in Beckwai, written on behalf of the King of Beckwai, informing me that the King proposed asking the assistance of the King of Denkera, who was a personal friend of his, and would like to have my opinion on it. This was too good an oppor-

tunity to be missed, for the Denkera country adjoined the Beckwai territory on its western border and was separated from Kumasi by the Achima country. The Denkeras were not members of the Ashanti confederation and supported the British Government in the 1896 expedition, supplying a strong fighting contingent. Apart from this, it showed a desire on the part of the King of Beckwai to help, and on reading a report marked "Urgent" from Captain Beamish I lost no time in starting off to interview the King of Beckwai. The report stated that an empty convoy Captain Beamish had sent back had been fired on near Dompuassi. A hot engagement ensued during which the carriers scattered into the bush; the escort were forced to retire. Four soldiers were missing, the rest of the escort had returned to Eginassi, where the carriers were coming in.

I found the King agitated. He was convinced that the Adansis were mobilizing. He anticipated that he would be attacked and could not trust his army. He confirmed that the King of Denkera was a personal friend of his and if I would write him a letter asking him to send his army at once to the Adansi-Beckwai border it would help matters and ease his mind. I took out my pocket notebook, wrote a polite request, detached it, and handed it to Mr. Jones. The King then handed me a letter, saying it was from Mr. Webster and he could do nothing about it. I read:

Obuassi,
May 26th, 1900.

To the King of Beckwai.

Yesterday morning Mr. Pekin of Mr. Jones's party left here about 7 o'clock to proceed to Beckwai. After passing the second village from here he met the people of the three villages named Akotachasivi flying in this direction.

They told him the Adansis had crossed the road between Yacaboo and Beckwai, they had caught two boys who were coming from Beckwai to Yacaboo early this morning, they told these boys that they were going to kill every Beckwai man whom they caught. They said they were coming here after Monday morning to shoot.

Now as my Directors rely on you to defend this property *I must*

insist that a large force of men be sent here immediately to assist us in repelling attack. I may say that I am expecting 51 Hausas every moment from the coast. Unfortunately they have been delayed.

Send a force near this at once.

Yours sincerely,
H. L. WEBSTER,
General Superintendent.

5 p.m., 27th.

P.S. Since writing the above the men of village Akotachasivi have been to see me and to warn me that on Monday the Adansis are coming to Obuassi to shoot. The Hausas have not yet arrived. I am sending another man down towards Fumsu to hurry them on.

In the meantime send troops to maintain the road between us and you clear. Send reply back by messenger.

Yours truly,
H. L. WEBSTER,
General Superintendent.

"We must answer this appeal, King," I said; "how many of your Beckwai army can you really trust?"

"Not more than three hundred."

"Please send them to Obuassi."

"I cannot. I want them for myself to flee to the Denkera country in case Queen Ashantuah defeats you at Esumeja. She is getting ready to attack you."

"Have no fear, King, the Big White Colonel will soon be up; send your three hundred men to Obuassi."

The King remained silent for several minutes then, as if taking a plunge, said: "Your soldiers are being defeated and running away. Your White Captain at Kwisa was defeated and some of his soldiers ran away, while only yesterday your soldiers were defeated at Dompuassi and ran back to Eginassi. Will your soldiers do any better at Esumeja now that Queen Ashantuah means to attack you?"

I hesitated to reply. I was thinking of the next news that would reach me. "The King has fled. The Beckwais are up and investing Esumeja. They have set free the Ashanti army at Kokofu to deal with the Governor who is still in Kumasi and must come out soon." The King's last remark gave a chance

of preventing this. I decided to take it, so, speaking slowly for Mr. Jones to understand clearly and interpret, I said:

"So you think that we might run away, too. Please call together your war chiefs and headmen of villages as soon as possible. Tell them Queen Ashantuah and the Ashanti army are going to run away from Kokofu. It may be one day, two days, one week, two weeks. Tell them to have nothing to do with Ashantis who run away. Tell them to wait and see if the White Captain is not telling the truth. Tell everybody, the Achimas, the Adansis, the Abadoms, Queen Ashantuah herself, so that they may all know and bear witness to what the White Captain has said. Will you do this, please?"

The necessary assurance was given and we parted.

On entering Esumeja and dismissing the escort, I saw the native Intelligence waiting to see me. He reported that the Adansis had collected in great numbers at Dompuassi, there was great enthusiasm and war drumming going on there, and they were telling the Beckwais they were going to kill the white men everywhere.

Mr. Webster was right; the attack was coming. Taking out my map and studying it I saw that Obuassi was only a short march (about three and a half miles) from Dompuassi, and the best and nearest place to intercept the enemy was at Esan Kwanta. Turning to Captain Haslewood I said:

"We must risk it and send some troops back from here. Obuassi must be saved. We must send back D Company from here to join Captain Beamish, the whole to proceed to Esan Kwanta."

"Could I make another suggestion?" he replied. "That Beamish go with his half-company direct to Obuassi. It is really dangerous to reduce our strength here; we have got to consider Kumasi too. We are only tempting providence, for if we are done in here everything is lost."

"Unfortunately Kwisa is also in a bad way and must be saved too," I pointed out. "Nothing less than an attack, and I hope a successful one, on the Adansis at Dompuassi can save both Obuassi and Kwisa. Get out the orders for Colour-Sergeant Mackenzie with half D Company and one hundred and fourteen

carriers to leave at dawn to-morrow. Send by them written instructions to Captain Beamish to proceed with the whole of D Company at once to Esan Kwanta, there to report on the situation at Dompuassi, having regard to a threatened attack by the Adansis on the Ashanti Goldfields and a possible attack on Kwisa."

The departure from Esumeja on May 29th of this half company and its maxim gun created, as was only to be expected, much criticism. It left only two hundred and forty-eight native soldiers, including wounded and sick, to carry on the active defence, and however short their absence was it was undoubtedly running a very great risk. It would be an additional incentive for Queen Ashantuah to press home her attack on us, and when the King of Beckwai learned of the retrograde movement probably hasten his decision to flee.

All through the previous night I was tormented with this terrible problem. The defiant war drumming at Kokofu made sleep impossible and when Captain Haslewood made one more appeal after learning from the native Intelligence that this war drumming, the one beat of the drum, was carrying out human sacrifices, probably our own captured soldiers and carriers, foretelling early vengeance on Esumeja, I had indeed to harden my heart and say the order must hold good.

D Company reached Esan Kwanta, which was the southern limit of the Beckwai territory, at 2 p.m., Captain Beamish reporting from there that the Adansi army with the King of Adansi was in force between Dompuassi and Esan Kwanta, and unless orders to the contrary were received, D Company would attack next morning.

This report confirmed Mr. Webster's statement in his letter that the Adansis were coming to shoot on Monday. It was clear that the Adansis were on their way to do so. Sub-Assistant Commissioner Donovan, with his armed Hausa police and rifles and ammunition for the forty-seven Europeans at Obuassi, must arrive too late. I immediately sent back my approval, adding if successful to push on to Kwisa and return with fresh stores to Esumeja without delay. He was to leave the blankets and spare kit of his company at Esan Kwanta and

pick it up on his return. With these instructions I enclosed the following telegram to be sent on reaching Kwisa:

From the Officer Commanding Advanced Troops, Esumeja.
To the Colonial Secretary, Accra.

May 29, 1900.

On sending back an officer and one company to-day, he reports to-night from Esan Kwanta Adansis in strength between Esan Kwanta and Dompuassi, thus shutting my rear and imperilling Kwisa. Am instructing Beckwai to augment that company and am calling upon King of Denkera to assist us in holding Beckwai country. Situation serious. No news from Kwisa for eight days. Rely upon main column to re-establish lines of communication.

W. MONTAGU HALL,
Captain.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

A Momentous Fight

THE plunge was taken—madness many will call it. In extenuation of my action I can but plead for leniency. War is no respecter of lives. I was young; the thought of those at Obuassi and Kwisa with long stilettos through their cheeks and their arms pinioned behind them, awaiting their turn for execution, was too strong for me. The order went forth which required the co-operation of the King of Beckwai. I racked my brains how to allay his fears and to secure the services of those three hundred Beckwai men the King had told me were the most he could rely on. I took up my fountain pen again and wrote to the King of Beckwai explaining the position and pointing out that all I wanted him to do was to send his three hundred loyal fighting men to Esan Kwanta, his own territory, to hold the place until D Company returned from Kwisa. I was enclosing a fresh appeal to the King of Denkera and a telegram to Colonel Willcocks. He was also asked to reply to Mr. Webster's letter and let me know when the Hausa police reached Obuassi. I wrote another letter to my native missionary friend, Mr. Jones, urging him to do his utmost to get the King to carry out my instructions.

The idea I had in view in enclosing the open telegram was to let the King see for himself my urgent call, while the bad news I had to report was already known to him. The telegram began:

To the Officer Commanding Main Column.

Esumeja,
May 29th.

Please hasten with every possible speed, etc., etc. Am prepared to hold Esumeja, etc.

That night, May 29th, after D Company had left, there was no peace for us at Esumeja. The war drumming at Kokofu never ceased; it dropped down to a single beat only to rise again to a continuous roar of beating drums, hurling defiance. The night before was child's play to it. The Ashantis seemed to have gone mad with excitement. Well, they might, they had every reason to be so. We could only grin and bear it. Everybody was glad when dawn came.

"Let's get it over, anything is better than this awful suspense; another night of it will finish me."

I sympathized with the speaker.

"Stick it, old man. By to-night it will be one way or the other. If Beamish does it, the Governor comes out, and we do our duty here, you fellows will have made history."

Off went a patrol towards Edjumun, and another through the outpost line near the cross paths towards Kokofu, while the native Intelligence with his assistants started off to Esan Kwanta. Behind the patrols followed the reliefs of scouts and watchers. The rest of us stood to arms in silence, many glancing from time to time at the impenetrable wall of jungle forest around us, first in the direction of Kumasi, then in the direction of Kokofu. My own thoughts centred on the opportunity afforded by the Ashanti orgy of the previous night to join hands with the Governor. What a chance to-day if only he would start. He did not; firing was heard but not from Kumasi; it was the fight going on south, the sound of the firing of which had been heard by Beckwai villagers who brought in the information.

It was not, however, till 7 p.m. that we received news of the result of the fighting. The tired out native head of Intelligence told us that the fight had lasted three hours, and not only had the Adansi army been driven back and defeated, but Dompuassi had been captured and occupied. He received this information at a personal interview with the chief of Esan Kwanta, in whose charge the blankets, etc., of D Company had been placed. He immediately started back to report, leaving his assistant to follow when information was forth-

coming that D Company had started again for Kwisa. Up to the time he left Esan Kwanta the three hundred Beckwai fighting men had not arrived there.

An hour or two later we had ample confirmation of Captain Beamish's great success. Not a drum was beating at Kokofu; not a sound was to be heard; it was like a city of the dead. What a treat it was for us, sweetened by the knowledge that Obuassi had been saved. Now was my chance of finding out where everybody was. I decided to write Sub-Assistant Commissioner Donovan a private letter, as he would be reaching Obuassi at any moment with his Hausa police and would at least tell me who was coming up; no one had done so yet, so I wrote saying I could get no information from anybody, had not heard from anyone for eight days, and implored him to write and tell me exactly who was coming up and to try and send us along some European rations.

The letter written, a tour of inspection, and then to bed, hoping that the morrow might bring us even better news.

We were not disappointed. A present of a bullock from the King of Beckwai to show his pleasure. He must, indeed, think we are winning. Here is his letter:

To Captain Hall.

DEAR SIR,

The King wishes me to inform you that he sent under his chief about three hundred men to Esan Kwanta. He has sent out spies to watch the Adansis, but has no news to report beyond a rumour that the nephew of the King of Adansi has been captured at Fumsu by Inspector Donovan.

He has not heard of the arrival of soldiers at Obuassi, but he has written to Mr. Webster that the men of his villages nearest Obuassi will give him every assistance.

From here through Beckwai villages he considers the road safe to Obuassi. He has sent a quick messenger to King of Denkera. He cannot state how soon he can come with his men.

He sends two picks, three spades, and two hoes. The pots are made at a village about two and a half hours from here and are there sold on Sunday's market, he will buy some for you.

He sends you a bullock to-day.

All your letters have been sent and he will attend to this matter strictly.

For King of Beckwai,
CHARLES L. ASHBY.

The artful old King! He never said a word about the fight; he left Mr. Jones to explain that in a letter from him which came a few hours later.

Beckwai,
May 31, 1900.

To the Captain Commanding the Troops.

SIR,

Message has just served from Kwanta that the officer there left all his luggages in charge of the Beckwais who are there with him and left with his soldiers for Kwisa, and on his way as he got to Dompuasi met the Adansis, they fired at him, and he fought with them. But he hasn't sent messenger yet to report the results. This is all the information received to-day.

I send you some yams for your use.

Good day, Sir,
Yours truly,
R. G. JONES
(*Pro.* the King of Beckwai).

Yams! We must indeed be winning!

The King followed this up with the intimation that he had secured the services of two Beckwai men who volunteered to take my messages to Kumasi and he was sending them on to Esumeja. This was indeed good news, for the Governor had apparently postponed his attempt to leave Kumasi, and this was no doubt influenced by the rumours which must have reached Kumasi of the arrival and fighting of our column so near Kumasi and whose arrival the Governor had been expecting daily. It was therefore essential to give him some indication of the present state of affairs and to let him have the code message sent up from the coast, the contents of which were undecipherable to us and might contain information of vital importance to him. For obvious reasons our own communication was in code, too, amateur in its way, but the only possible one which suggested itself to us, containing both code and message. It is reproduced here exactly as it was sent.

1 . 4 . 22 . 1 . 14 . 3 . 5 . 4 —— 20 . 18 . 15 . 15 . 16 . 19 . ×

8 . 1 . 12 . 20 . 5 . 4. ESUMEJA

1 . 23 . 1 . 9 . 20 . 9 . 14 . 7 ⌡ 13 . 1 . 9 . 14 (3 . 15 . 12 . 21 . 13 . 14.)

A D A N S I 20 . 18 . 5 . 1 . 3 . 8 . 25. 4 . 5 . 12 . 1 . 25.

9 . 14 . 7.

18 . 5 . 1 . 18.

 = α & ω = A & Ω

Beta, Gamma, Delta, Eta

1 . 3 . 3 . 15 . 13 . 16 . 1 . 14 . 25 . 9 . 14 . 7 Code message

14 . 15 . 20. 21 . 14 . 4 . 5 . 18 . 19 . 20 . 15 . 15 . 4. 8 . 5 . 18 . 5.

Esumeja, June 2, 1900.

W. Montagu Hall,
Captain.

We were, however, not a little disturbed by the non-return of D Company. It was three days since the successful fight at Dompuassi and as Kwisa was only four miles farther on we were not a little puzzled. Reports came in from the chief of the three hundred Beckwai fighting men still holding Esan Kwanta of the sound of firing in the neighbourhood of Dompuassi and Kwisa. We could only surmise that D Company was meeting with opposition or that the Adansis were making a last effort to capture Kwisa before the arrival of Colonel Willcock's command.

We were, nevertheless, cheered up by the definite news that Obuassi was safe. Here is the reply I received.

Obuassi,
June 2, 1900.

DEAR HALL,

Received letter safe to-day dated May 30th. Sorry to hear you are cut off. As far as I knew when I left Fumsu on May 29th Major Wilkinson, Cramer, and two other white officers were there with 300 men, and I was told 700 troops were following them up.

A considerable number of Adansis are near the mines here within two hours' journey. I have asked permission of Major Wilkinson to take 500 armed Beckwais to Dompuassi and attack. I will let you know as soon as I get an answer from him.

The Superintendent of Mines here, Mr. Webster, will give you some provisions and I will forward them to Beckwah's village.

There is nothing going on here, all is quiet as far as I see, but I expect we will have a brush with the brutes before long. I will let you know if there are any developments. I hope you will do the same.

Hoping you are keeping good health.

Believe me yours,
D. A. DONOVAN.

P.S. All your letters must have got through alright as all is safe down here.—D. A. D.

Donovan was, indeed, taking the King of Beckwai at his word. Five hundred armed Beckwais!

This letter, however, confirmed that all was not well with Dompuassi and Kwisa, while the indications at Esumeja pointed

to a contemplated stroke there, for the Sierra Leone Frontier Police, born scouts, brilliantly led and trained by Lieutenant Edwards, were more and more engaged with the Ashantis, testifying to their increased activity in our immediate neighbourhood.

This indication of coming trouble was followed by the arrival of two envoys. They were heated and agitated, explaining that they were of the King of Beckwai's household and his interpreter. The latter said that the King was so upset that he would not wait for the message to be written but rushed them off to tell the White Captain at Esumeja.

"What's the message?" I asked.

The interpreter glanced round and, seeing all clear, whispered:

"A second contingent of Achimas are on their way to Kokofu, and Queen Ashantuah is making ready to destroy you."

"Thank the King for his message, tell him that one thousand, yes, one thousand new soldiers will be up any day now."

The two men made a native obeisance and withdrew.

Rejoining Captain Haslewood I told him that I did not like the look of things:

"There must be something seriously wrong in our rear. Donovan told us in his letter that all those troops were coming up and yet there are no signs of them. Surely some of them must have got to Kwisa, but why not let us have D Company back? Beamish knows only too well our dangerous position here, and their blankets and spare equipment are still at Esan Kwanta awaiting their return. We cannot wait any longer now that Queen Ashantuah has been reinforced and threatens to exterminate us; so get a messenger ready to go to Obuassi and I will write another letter to Donovan and one to Officer Commanding Kwisa, to enclose with it, to be sent on via Fumsu."

The letter to Officer Commanding Kwisa ran:

Esumeja,
June 6, 1900.

1. No reports have been received from you since May 22nd, and hearing of the treachery of the Adansis, D Co. 1st W.A.F.F. were despatched to your assistance and the Officer Commanding that company was instructed to report to me all that occurred

while away from this command. I therefore presume that he or you are unable to communicate with me, but as I have received letters from Obuassi stating that Major Wilkinson with 300 men were at Fumsu on May 29th I am at a loss to account for this.

2. I am sending this letter via Fumsu and Obuassi, the road to the latter place being open, and I would request that some notification of your safety may be sent with all despatch.

3. The situation here is unchanged, enemy still in force at Kokofu and road open from here to Kwanta. No news from Kumasi.

4. The supply of foods for Europeans is almost exhausted; the stores left behind at Kwisa should be sent up with the troops.

That afternoon native Intelligence reported that very heavy firing had been heard that day in the neighbourhood of Kwisa. They could obtain nothing from the Beckwais at Kwanta, who only shook their heads ominously. Our barometer at Kokofu was even worse; it was set stormy. That night sleep was impossible by the uncanny war drumming of the five war camps around Kokofu which were hurling simultaneous defiance at us. Something was amiss. This was increased next morning by greater activity of enemy patrols, the absence of supplies for the market, and the general demeanour of the Beckwais. Finding the market still deserted on the following day and no explanation forthcoming, I wrote the King of Beckwai for an explanation and said if food was not coming forward I would send troops in to fetch it. The following reply was received:

Beckwai,
June 8, 1900.

Captain W. M. Hall.

DEAR SIR,

The King wishes me to say that he is very sorry for the delay in sending you food. He promises faithfully to hold a daily market in future at Esumeja, starting to-morrow. He hopes you will not send any of your men to Beckwai.

For the King of Beckwai,
CHARLES L. ASHBY.

DEAR CAPT. HALL,

You know how dilatory the King is, and even in the important matter of food for your men it is hard to get him to act promptly,

however I think things will go on better. Mr. Jones has spoken to him seriously and he has promised to do the best in his power. The sheep, etc., are under the charge of his chief and as far as I can judge he has very little real power.

Yours truly,
CHARLES L. ASHBY.

I sat musing. The chiefs are the pulse. There must be something wrong in our rear; it is two days now since the firing was heard and not a word or sign of anybody. What is amiss?

My thoughts were cut short by a shout from the door.

"Sir, two messengers arrived from Kumasi!"

I fairly jumped to the door and saw coming up the incline a small group headed by Captain Haslewood. I waited under cover; it was raining. I picked the messengers out, two stalwart looking fellows with bare feet and heads, a loin cloth, and a second large cloth or plaid over their shoulders. They made an obeisance and, taking out of his loin cloth a small packet, each handed me one. I shook them both by the hand and told the interpreter to take the men and give them food and drink and I would see them again later. Turning to Captain Haslewood I said, "Come in and we will go through these packages at once."

I started on the first packet and began unfolding it most carefully. The first paper was a dirty telegraph form. It could barely be read and with difficulty we made out a few code words. Haslewood jumped up and went to a file of papers.

"Here it is. It was sent from this telegraph office weeks ago before the line was cut."

I unfolded a second.

"What about this, Haslewood? It is in code, too."

"Yes, that is on the file also, sent off a few days later than the other."

I opened the last. Haslewood was glancing over my shoulder.

"That's new," he said, "there's no record of that in the office. Without a code we won't know what the message means."

"Let's have a try," I said, and read:

"From Governor, Kumasi, May 16, 1900.
"To Colonial Secretary, Accra.
"Ruminators chapelries Ruination. Hopeless Haslewood."

"We are not going to have much luck with this packet," I said, "let's try the other."

I opened it very very carefully.

"It is from the Governor but not for us, Haslewood, but it is dated June 4th to the Colonial Secretary, Accra. Here it is."

I read aloud:

"Some Kroo boys having expressed their intention of endeavouring to pass through the rebel lines, I take this opportunity of sending you a short minute.

"Since the 24th of April I have despatched several telegrams addressed both to you and to the Secretary of State, few if any of which have, I fear, reached you. I will not trouble you with copies of all of them now, because I intend to deal with the matters referred to in them when I reach the Coast. I send you, however, copies of three telegrams, one dated April 30th reporting a serious attack on the Fort by the rebels on the previous day and the arrival on the same day of the Lagos Hausas under Captain Aplin; one a telegram announcing the death of Captain Middlemist from malarial fever, and the third advising the arrival at Kumasi of Major Morris with a detachment of Hausas from the Northern Territories. All of these it will be as well to send on to the Secretary of State.

"2. Further, I regret to announce the death of Assistant-Inspector Maguire. This officer accompanied a sortie which was made on the rebel lines at Bantama under the command of Captain Marshall, Special Service Officer, on the 29th of May. When the retirement was ordered he was shot through the heart and died instantly. His body was brought in and was buried with military honours by the side of Captain Middlemist. He was a gallant officer and his untimely death is greatly to be deplored.

"3. We are unable to get any information and have had none for over five weeks, but it is rumoured that a Relief

Column is on its way here. I am unable to give you the reasons why it is imperative that this column should arrive in the course of the next few days through fear of this minute falling into the hands of the rebels.

"F. M. HODGSON,
"Governor."

I paused and looked up.

"Sad about Middlemist," I said. "He was with Baden-Powell when the King of Beckwai made his submission in the previous expedition. It is sad, too, to learn that Maguire has been killed in a sortie on May 29th. This sortie cannot have anything to do with the Governor's attempt to break out, for Bantama is north of Kumasi and in the opposite direction to Prahsu, the objective the Governor reported he would endeavour to reach. It looks more likely that the rumours he heard about us and which the King of Beckwai told us he would certainly get news of, decided the Governor to give up the idea of breaking out on May 27th and to await further news of us. The Governor must have been pretty certain that there was something in these rumours and that we were not far off, or else he would not have written that it was imperative for this column to arrive in the course of the next few days, but why not a line to us? Let's have the Kroo boys up and see what information they can give us. You might bring them in one at a time with the interpreter."

The first soon entered. He was given a seat and the interpreter was kept busy in my anxiety to get accurate information to work upon. I was able to learn from this Kroo boy that up to the time he left Kumasi everybody was able to move freely about the place; there was no danger or apprehension of an Ashanti attack on the place; that the Europeans and native soldiers were in good health and fairly well supplied with food, but the large civil population was getting short of food. The Ashantis had built stockades across all the leading roads a mile or two from the town, a detachment of Ashantis was maintained at each stockade with occasional patrolling between them. The civil population in their search for food in the plantations around were fired upon and on several occasions

the Hausas under British officers were sent out to attack these stockades. At one time about the middle of May there was a peace talk, everybody went out to get plantains and bananas, and the Ashantis brought in some food to the market, but nothing came of it. The last time the Hausas attacked the stockades to get food was on May 29th.

The Kroo boy said it was common knowledge that a Relief Column was on the main road near Beckwai and that many Ashantis had gone down to fight them. He tested this by penetrating farther out in search of food and was so successful that he and his other Kroo boy, who had come down from the Northern Territories, longing to get back to the Coast, had made up their minds to break out, and volunteered to the Governor to take any message to the Coast. They left Kumasi late at night through one of the plantations, hid by day, reached Beckwai via Pekki, and came on here on the fourth day.

He saw Captain Aplin's column coming in after their fight. They had brought in boxes of ammunition. He also saw Major Morris's column come in during the peace talk. The Ashantis allowed them to pass the stockades and he saw the carriers of the column bringing in a lot of boxes of ammunition too.

The other Kroo boy was then called in. His story was that he accompanied Major Morris's column from the Northern Territories. They had seven officers, two hundred and fifty Hausas, one 7-pounder gun, and about a hundred levies. They were carrying a number of boxes of ammunition. The Queen-Mother of the N'Koranzas came out to meet them with food. This powerful tribe was friendly and gave them plenty of food to take on. About twelve miles from Kumasi they ran into an Ashanti ambush; Major Morris and some Hausas were wounded. They had no more fighting. When they got near Kumasi the Ashantis allowed them to go through the stockades. They were told that a peace palaver was going on and that there would be no more fighting.

For five days things were quiet in Kumasi, when fighting began again. There were various attempts by the Hausas to force the stockades to collect food from the plantations outside. Some were successful and some were not. The last



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Sir Frederick and Lady Hodgson welcoming the arrival of relief under Major Morris, D.S.O.

attempt was made on May 29th, when Captain Maguire was killed when the Hausas had to retire, and there was no more fighting up to the time he left, June 4th. At no time did he see any preparations made to leave Kumasi, neither was any attempt made by the Hausas to fight their way out of Kumasi. Everybody was waiting and expecting the soldiers that were near Beckwai, and some said at Esumeja, and it was with this belief that he and his friend decided to leave Kumasi and come here.

The Kroo boys and the interpreter then withdrew and were told to take a rest, and when ready to proceed to come back for a letter.

So it was quite true about Major Morris, and he had our bluff tactics on the march up to thank for getting his column into Kumasi without fighting. So we had saved some lives and a good deal of ammunition. Morris's force had strengthened the garrison and brought in an extra supply of ammunition so urgently needed, while the Ashantis themselves brought in food to the market.

The other piece of news was bad. There was something ominous in the words, "I am unable to give you the reasons why it is imperative that this column [meaning ourselves] should arrive in the course of the next few days, through fear of this minute falling into the hands of the rebels."

The interpretation seemed clear enough. The Governor meant to make the attempt to break out any day now, and just at the moment when we had not got the men to prevent Queen Ashantuah intercepting the exodus, let alone a contemplated attack on Esumeja.

Haslewood and I agreed that we had got to make any sacrifice to keep the Ashanti army at Kokofu. We could only wait and face it and trust that Colonel Willcocks's men and D Company might yet be up in time—we had sent back urgent calls enough.

One thing that had to be done was to add an explanation to the Governor's letter to the Colonial Secretary. Without an explanation the Colonial Secretary and officers who received the letter would have expected us to act in accordance with the telegraphic instructions sent us when the Governor fixed

May 26th as the last day he would remain in Kumasi unless relieved. The Colonial Secretary had telegraphed us then, "Very important you should push on to Kumasi with all speed." It would be madness to do so now. I felt that our plan offered a ray of hope and a possible chance; the other only a certain tragedy and the loss of Ashanti. I therefore sat down and wrote as follows:

To the Colonial Secretary, Accra.

Esumeja,
June 8, 1900.

1. My scouts report a great concentration at Kokofu and that the Achimas have sent a large contingent to join them.

2. I do not think it advisable to disturb the present position of the enemy until I hear of the safety of my rear and receive definite information as to who and what is the force behind me, and further the munitions and stores that I now have with me would only suffice for a short period to maintain my own column and I am in no position to support a larger number in the event of being besieged for any indefinite period.

3. Two Kroo boys came in to-day from Kumasi, bringing the enclosed letter and telegrams from His Excellency the Governor. I have no code book and the contents of the telegrams are therefore unknown to me. It is remarkable that His Excellency the Governor addresses no communication to the Officer Commanding the advancing Relief Column of which he has heard a rumour, neither is the absolute seriousness of the situation at Kumasi so impressed as to lead me to risk all in a premature advance with my column weakened by one hundred and fifty men sent back to the assistance of Kwisa, and when the situation is not ripe to render an advance at this stage effective. These boys also inform me that a column from the Northern Territories has succeeded in getting into Kumasi with its ammunition and that the large supply brought by Captain Aplin was also safely taken in.

4. The health of the garrison here continues good, but I have to report the death of Bugler Charlie, E Company 1st W.A.F.F., on 6th inst.

The wounded in the action of 24th ult. are progressing favourably and Lieutenant Edwards, S.L.F.P., recovered from his wounds.

W. Montagu Hall,
Captain.

I thought that this letter ought to explain matters. They must see that if the Governor did not come out in the next few days there was little to worry about as far as Kumasi was concerned. If he did come out, they should see by my letter that the bulk of the Ashantis were alongside us at Kokofu and that if we were destroyed the game would be up. That ought to make them hurry.

Placing the letter with the other enclosures, including a request that the two Kroo boys should be rewarded, no payment having been made by me, the papers were made up into a packet, handed to one of the Kroo boys with careful instructions to take it to the White Officer at Fumsu or Prahsu, proceeding via Beckwai, Obuassi, and Fumsu, avoiding the main road to Kwisa.

Now for the crisis, I thought. Which is it to be? If only we had D Company back to give the Governor and ourselves a sporting chance.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Colonel Willcocks Arrives at Prahsu

COLONEL WILLCOCKS could hardly believe his eyes as he sat down at the rest house at Prahsu on June 8th to read the reports which awaited his arrival there. He had just completed a long and tiring march and had left a part of his escort, namely B Company 2nd W.A.F.F., under Captain Beddoes, a day's march behind, to escort and bring up the remaining five hundred loaded carriers.

Colonel Willcocks read the reports over carefully. They were two in number, both from Captain Hall. The first a telegram.

To the Officer Commanding Main Column.

Esumeja,
May 29th.

Please hasten with every possible speed bringing munitions and stores. My own have not followed and paralyse movement. My rear unsettled, Adansi doubtful, Dompuassi having fired upon and dispersed column of carriers, four soldiers of the party missing reported killed. Another column for Kwisa with one company W.A.F.F. left to-day. Am prepared to hold Esumeja. Have received no information *re* your movements.

CAPTAIN HALL.

Colonel Willcocks saw at once that it was this company with its carriers which had been taken to be the Governor of Gold Coast and party with sick and wounded and political refugees who were expected to arrive at Fumsu by May 30th, as he had cabled to the Secretary of State for the Colonies in London on May 31st. He also realized that Lieutenant-Colonel

Carter, who he knew had left Fumsu on June 2nd with three hundred and ten native troops, would be greatly surprised to meet, instead of the Governor, this company at Kwisa and learn that the Governor had not left Kumasi. Colonel Willcocks realized, too, that Lieutenant-Colonel Carter would proceed on to join hands with Captain Hall, and he himself be expected to act on this telegram and hurry up matters by sending off from Prahsu next day a strong convoy with supplies to Fumsu.

Taking up the other report, Colonel Willcocks then read:

Esumeja,
May 24, 1900.

SIR,

I have the honour to state that I duly concentrated the force under my command at Esumeja, Eginassi, and Beckwai on May 22nd and that from information received I saw that it was necessary to see in what force the enemy were in my front and flanks before advancing to Kumasi.

I ascertained that the enemy's plans were to hold us in front at Edjumun and a stronger force to outflank me from the town of Kokofu where the Queen of Ejissu, the head of the rising, was, which would if successful place the Beckwai country in absolute peril. I therefore considered a reconnaissance in force necessary against the rebels massing at Kokofu. I therefore decided on the following plan which I carried out last evening.

1. To leave a garrison at Eginassi and with the rest of my force to concentrate here, giving it out, even to the King of Beckwai, that I was going to force my way along the main road to Kumasi on the following morning. At daylight I advanced with the force in light order leaving a garrison here of fifty Lagos Hausas with one maxim and sending word to the King of Beckwai to advance on Abadom as soon as he heard our firing, and burn the town where rebels were also congregated.

I met with opposition within half an hour but drove the enemy on in front of me at the cross roads, half-way between here and Kokofu, where another road comes from Kumasi. I left a half-company 1st W.A.F.F. with one maxim to cover my retirement. The force continued on to Kokofu, and at one of its villages I met with considerable opposition, but succeeded in driving them through and burning it. The force then continued on and when within sight

of the main village of Kokofu we were attacked by great numbers and from the amount of firing I estimated the enemy's strength there not less than eight thousand, the numbers told me by my spies.

We successfully held them for over an hour from outflanking us but could not advance and after doing as much damage as possible with the 75-mm. gun decided to withdraw, which I did successfully, returning to camp with my whole force at 11.30 a.m.; the enemy did not attempt to follow us.

Our casualties were slight and I put this down to the most erratic firing of the enemy and the distance they kept from the road. Lieutenant Edwards, Sierra Leone Frontier Police, was slightly wounded in the arm, Sergeant Griggs, R.A., was hit by a spent shot, one soldier, Sierra Leone Frontier Police, dangerously wounded, five soldiers slightly wounded. I am unable to estimate the enemy's losses but believe them to be considerable as they were in such numbers and made several desperate attempts to outflank us, however I am told that the Beckwais have broken Abadom and have, and are still, driving them south-east.

I am now of opinion that a further advance of the small force would only add to the difficulties of the main column, as the strong force at Kokofu is a standing menace and the rebels will have to be dispersed before an advance can be made; again the position we hold admits of the concentration of a large force which could advance on Kumasi by three distinct routes. I have therefore decided to hold Esumeja and form an advance depot here to keep the lines of communication open and to await news of the advance of the main column.*

I have the honour to be, etc.,
W. MONTAGU HALL,
Captain.

Colonel Willcocks opened out his map and saw that Edjumun was on the main path to Kumasi, three miles north of Esumeja, and blocked Captain Hall's advance to Kumasi with probably six thousand Ashantis there, while another eight thousand were on his right flank at Kokofu, two miles east of Esumeja. He knew, too, that Captain Hall, after sending one company back to Kwisa, could only have two hundred and

* A summary of this despatch was received by the Secretary of State the following day, June 9th, and published in all English papers.

fifty native troops at Esumeja, so it would be as much as he could do to hold his own; but if Lieutenant-Colonel Carter was up there with his own lot and the company that had been sent back, he might try to enter Kumasi by one or other of the two alternative routes Captain Hall had mentioned. On the other hand, Lieutenant-Colonel Carter might not feel himself strong enough and decide to await Colonel Willcocks's arrival. The crux of the matter was whether Kumasi could hold out any longer. But how was it that Colonel Willcocks had no later information than May 29th, beyond the fact that Lieutenant-Colonel Carter had left Fumsu for the north on June 2nd with three hundred and fifty native troops? He decided at any rate to let Lieutenant-Colonel Carter know his own intentions and to send him instructions to act upon.

This is the actual letter Colonel Willcocks then wrote.

To Lieutenant-Colonel Carter, or any British officer, Beckwai.

Camp Prahsu,
7 p.m., June 8, 1900.

The bearer brought and delivered a telegram from some Civil Officer to Director Telegraphs Cape Coast. He arrived in five days from Beckwai and promises return in five days leaving to-morrow —I have given him one pound and if he delivers this give him £2 more for doing so.

I understand Lieutenant-Colonel Carter, Lieutenant-Colonel Wilkinson, and Captain Hall are at or in the vicinity of Beckwai, but no letter or message has been received from Carter or Wilkinson, altho messages from private individuals keep coming in, this has puzzled me as I can form no estimate of the military situation. I am here with 150 W.A.F.F.s but no gun; another 150 are at Fumsu as there is absolutely no food here and none to be purchased, but as I have only arrived two hours ago I cannot give any certain opinion on this matter. As far as I can gather Colonel Carter has about 450 troops and two guns available for his advance to Kumasi, and Beckwai might possibly furnish enough food for the advance to relieve Kumasi as well as some sort of scouts and general helpers. I have here only sufficient rice to feed my troops of followers for a few days and no reserve. Two hundred bags rice and four salt leave to-morrow for Fumsu; everything available has been or is being sent up to the troops in front. I expect two thousand carriers in five

days from Cape Coast, these are Sierra Leone men and fit to take on fighting duty, and the day they arrive I am ready to advance, taking with me enough food to ration stations *en route* as well as the garrison of Kumasi, who I understand will be very short of supplies.

I have absolutely no information to work on, hence I cannot say if my estimates are correct or not. I take it that to advance to Kumasi merely with soldiers and without any food would be of little use and only hamper movements; also I have only one hammock between every two white men and no carriers for wounded.

2. Under all the above circumstances unless I receive some kind of message from the front, from Carter, Wilkinson, Hall, or other European asking for urgent help I think it best to wait arrival of carriers from Cape Coast and then advance rapidly and be in a position to really assist the garrison, bringing along the women and others not wanted as well as wounded.

3. If you find yourself in a position which you consider obliges you to wait my arrival before attempting the relief of Kumasi you will wait till I come; rest assured I will not be a day later than I am obliged to and we can then attack and disperse any body of Ashantis that may be met *en route*. Only at any cost or bribe inform Garrison Kumasi that I am coming if they will only hold on and that nothing will stop us and that food and supplies of ammunition will come in plenty. As you are aware on my arrival at Cape Coast I found no reserve of food or carriers and no arrangements for either; hence everything has had to be arranged since my arrival and this is the cause of delay. The local carrier supply has been a farce; I have not a word of news from Kumasi nor from anyone later than May 29th and under such circumstances everything has been done that can be done. By any means in your power inform Kumasi and I can say no more than that in all other details I trust you to act with sound common sense; losing no opportunity of effecting the relief of Kumasi but risking no chance of a reverse or running short of food if they can wait till I come with three hundred men and plenty of food.

4. I have no field gun; if you can send the 75-mm. gun or a 7 pounder down to meet me I shall be glad and with this I feel sure my advance would be much eased; but if you cannot do this without danger I will work my way up without.

5. I cannot believe that any number of Ashantis can stop the advance of troops led by British officers.

J. WILLCOCKS, Colonel,
Commanding Ashanti Field Force.

This done, Colonel Willcocks reckoned up the number of men he had to effect the relief of Kumasi.

	Men	*Maxims*	*Guns*
His own escort	300	2	—
At Fumsu	150	—	—
With Lieutenant-Colonel Carter ..	450	2	2
With Captain Hall	250	2	1
Details at Kwisa and Prahsu ..	50	—	—
	——	—	—
Total	1,200	6	3
En route from Southern Nigeria ..	150	1	—
From Northern Nigeria	300	2	—

From Sierra Leone 1st West African Regiment, which is a Regular battalion of the British Army and sent by the War Office.

From England a number of Special Service Officers and a large supply of stores and munitions.

From Mombassa 1st Central African Regiment and 2nd Central African Regiment with a strong contingent of Sikhs.

The War Office also ordered the despatch from Sierra Leone of a detachment of the 3rd West India Regiment with one gun.

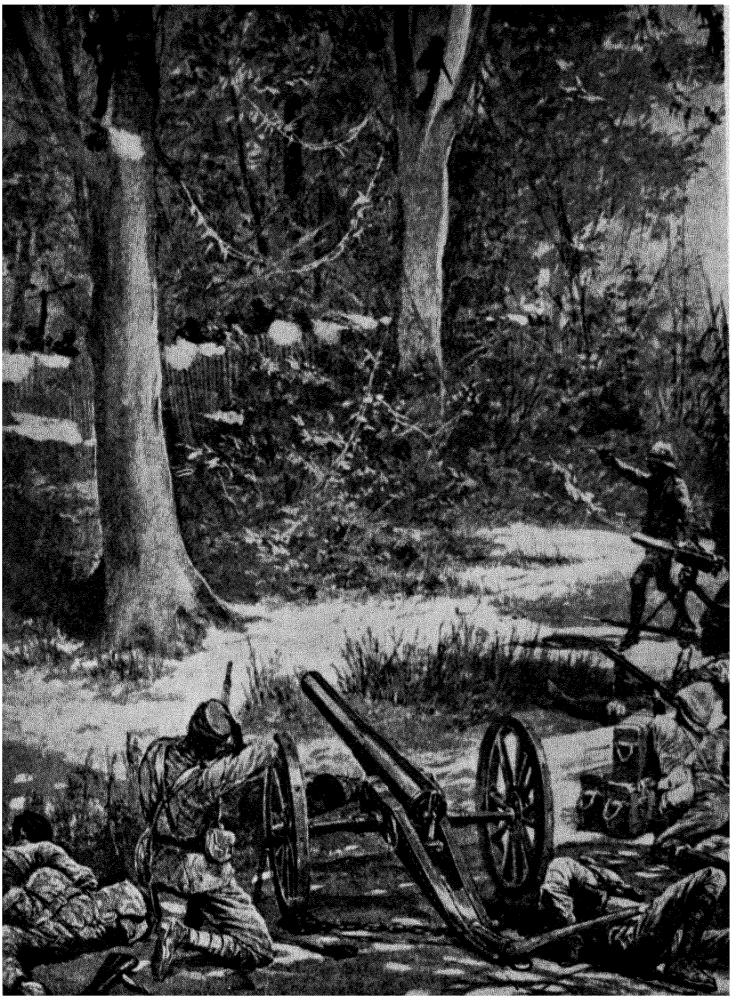
Prahsu next day, June 9th, was humming with activity. Headquarters Staff was kept busy superintending the arrangement and accommodation for a large base camp and every available carrier was put to work on one job or another. The scene was most animated and Colonel Willcocks could be seen, attended by his personal orderly in bright scarlet zouave jacket, moving from one area to another to see how the work was progressing. His attention was attracted to the crossing of the ferry boat in which he could see a native was being ferried across and, thinking he might be a messenger, he beckoned him. Colonel Willcocks was handed a letter. His face gave a startled look. It was from Lieutenant-Colonel Carter stating that he was at Kwisa with seven of his twelve officers wounded and ninety of other ranks. He had been compelled, after engaging the Adansis for two hours on June 6th, to retire to Kwisa the same day.

He reported that after he had left Fumsu on June 2nd he engaged the enemy at Sherimassi, losing four men killed, and on arrival at Kwisa found that D Company with its wounded had arrived there the previous day. The company had engaged the Adansis at Dompuassi previous to its arrival at Kwisa. On June 6th, leaving a small garrison at Kwisa, Lieutenant-Colonel Carter advanced to engage the Adansis whom he met at Dompuassi. Captain Roupell, who was leading the advance guard, was at once wounded, then Lieutenant-Colonel Carter, Lieutenant O'Malley several times while gallantly trying to keep his maxim gun going until he had to give up from loss of blood, and Lieutenant Edwards, R.A. The last named, in charge of the 7-pounder, had the whole of his gun detachment either killed or wounded, and he himself had in the end, until he too fell wounded, to load and fire the gun, ramming the charges home with his walking stick. Captain Roupell, although wounded through both wrists, continued to bring up ammunition with his forearms. Colonel Carter, wounded as he was (he was shot in the eye) and seeing the number of casualties, including his second in command, Major P. S. Wilkinson, decided on a retreat which he personally gave orders to be carried out.

While the retreat was in progress, Colour-Sergeant Mackenzie, who was in temporary command of D Company 1st W.A.F.F. owing to Captain Beamish being in a hammock down with fever, came up from his company, which formed the rearguard, and asked permission to charge the stockade. He was allowed to do so, and gallantly leading his men, who followed him nobly with other officers and men, captured the stockade, clearing out the enemy with the bayonet, thus saving a difficult and dangerous situation. Although the enemy had thus been driven off, Lieutenant-Colonel Carter felt compelled, owing to the number of his wounded and the shortage of ammunition to return to Kwisa.

One can well imagine Colonel Willcocks's feelings. He acted promptly.

He ordered Captain C. J. Melliss to proceed at once with a hundred men to Kwisa, as escort to the convoy of three



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The Fight at Dompuassi

hundred carriers with ammunition and food and on completion of that duty to return to Prahsu.

Captain Biss, who accompanied this escort, writes:*

"Captain Mellis and I, with F Company 1st W.A.F.F., got orders to proceed instantly to the relief of Kwisa, and within an hour we were off, escorting a convoy. We were to force our way through the enemy, ration the garrison, replenish their ammunition, and then return. Dr. Buée, of the Gold Coast Medical Department, accompanied us. We fell in at 2 p.m., but it was four o'clock before we got across the Prah; a delay which prevented us doing more than ten miles on the slippery road. It was a wretched march; the rain poured down, we were soon wet through, and it was a quarter past eight —long after dark—before we got in.

"An early start the following day enabled us to reach Fumsu at 8 a.m., which place was then the advance base on the lines of communication. White officers were so scarce that this important post was being commanded by Quartermaster-Sergeant Thomas, 2nd W.A.F.F., who was living in a roughly constructed sort of redoubt, built of earth and timber round the rest house. He had a cheering tale to relate: every party of troops and all convoys had been attacked from this point onwards; the bush was swarming with the enemy; all the troops ahead were perilously situated, short of food and ammunition and crippled with casualties. In fact, to quote his own words: 'You are simply walking into a death-trap, sir; it isn't fighting, it's murder. I am sure you will never get there with only a hundred men and all those carriers!' However, we were going on, and that as quickly as possible. It was a grave emergency, and we had our orders.

"After breakfasting we started off at noon of June 10th in fighting formation; only a hundred odd rank and file, with one maxim and some three hundred carriers. Captain Mellis in front, Colour-Sergeant Foster with the gun, Corporal Philpotts in charge of the immediate escort with the carriers, Dr. Buée next with his hospital train, and I, with Corporal Buchanan, in command of the rearguard.

* *The Relief of Kumasi*, by Captain H. C. J. Biss (Methuen & Co.).

"We now learned for the first time of the extraordinary way in which the enemy transmitted news. The moment we set out, a Dane gun was fired somewhere away in the forest. This signal was repeated by another, and so on as far as the enemy's next war camp. A rough estimate of the strength and composition of our force was also given by the number of guns these scouts let off.

"The River Fum, which flows round Fumsu exactly like the Prah at Prahsu, was rising, but still fordable; so we waded it and went off with a better idea of what to expect than on our arrival three and a half hours previously; but we knew we could not afford the time to scout carefully all the way. Clearing volleys into the bush must be depended upon, and only particularly nasty localities looked into before the column passed.

"It is always a wise course to conserve one's strength; and as there was no immediate probability of an attack, I thought I could safely take a short turn in my hammock. So I got in, but found that lying wet to the waist and with a revolver jammed into one's ribs on one side and an ammunition pouch on the other was not the height of comfort. The swish of the rushing river was scarce out of hearing when crash, bang, went a volley. I leapt out. What! were we attacked already? The alarmist rumours we had heard must, then, really have represented the true state of affairs. No; a false alarm: it was, after all, only a clearing volley into a thicket with an ugly aspect. Should I be carried a little farther? No, on the whole, I thought I would not. Things looked business-like, and the enemy was no respecter of any particular part of the column. My rearguard might, for all we knew, be their first fancy; nor were they averse to a pot-shot at a hammock, in which only white and disabled black men travelled, and the former were their favourite bag.

"And now what is that coming into view ahead? Yes, it is a village, and what is more there go a few Adansis running for dear life. The maxim was mounted on its tripod in a minute, and commenced belching bullets at them at the rate of six hundred to the minute. 'Cease fire!' We were too late: they

were gone, and the precious pellets must be kept for better sport than running game. One or two sparsely populated villages flying white flags had been passed through just after leaving Prahsu, but those we now met were deserted, and mutely told the sorrowful tale of war.

"Scarce two hours of this nerve-straining tramp and we halted. What had happened now? The question was scarce asked when down doubled an orderly to tell me I was required in front. I went, and found a cheerful sight awaiting me. There was the river, the same old Fum, which had met us again at another bend, but its volume and its width were more than doubled. The banks were now marshy, overhung with prickly thickets, rank grass, and obstructive bushes. On the far side of this whirling, rushing mill-stream stood another village, Akrofum. How many Dane guns lay hidden in the undergrowth between it and these unfordable eighty yards of foaming, eddying flood? What could possibly be done?

"Another West African problem which no manual had made rules to solve. There were no trees which we could cut down with our machetes long enough to throw across; neither had we axes with which to fell the larger ones, nor rope with which to drag them to the river's bank. To right and left a rapid reconnaissance only showed that no better place existed. Worst of all, the water was steadily rising with alarming rapidity; there was, therefore, the impending risk that the river behind would become impassable before we could get back, and that we should find ourselves cut off between the two!

"Luck at last! Swept some distance farther down, and caught in the branches of a fallen tree on our side, was a native canoe, but what a craft it was, with a heavy circular bottom which made it roll to such an extent that it was unsafe even when empty! Could it be a trick on the enemy's part? was the question which instinctively suggested itself to us. However, there was nothing else for it: an experiment must be made. A maxim was got into position, so as to sweep the opposite bush should our attempt to cross be opposed. What a target we made, congregated together at the water's edge, discussing and arranging the preliminaries of the crossing.

"Two naked hammock 'boys,' with long bamboo poles, volunteered to take this unseaworthy vessel over. If only a landing-party could be got over by driblets in the canoe, surely some better means of crossing could be subsequently arranged. In got a couple of soldiers, having first been wisely ordered to take off their belts, and off they started. The little cockleshell rocked ominously in the quiet water near our bank; one heavier lurch, and it shipped a little water, yet it glided slowly on. Then an eddy caught it and swept it into the midstream sluice. Here the seething, boiling current admitted of no warning, and in an instant the canoe capsized and shot, bottom upwards, down the swirling tide.

"Every eye was strained, an involuntary gasp escaped the lips of many of the onlookers. Without a moment's hesitation in plunged Captain Melliss, but he could not live unaided in such a torrent, strong swimmer though he was. On his way out from home he had won the Royal Humane Society's medal for saving life at sea, but he was much weaker now than then, for this climate soon saps strength, and so he was forced at once to call for help. Another European went to his aid, and at last the rescue was effected. The men were saved, but unfortunately their rifles were lost.

"Even then, however, many yards of boggy bank had to be waded over, while hosts of driver ants and the lacerating undergrowth left many painful reminiscences of the adventure. The intense chill produced by this sudden immersion in ice-cold water after the copious sweating of the hot march, the maddening bites of the ants as they swarmed over and stung their victims mercilessly, the knowledge of the imminent jeopardy of blackwater fever or sunstroke, all urgently necessitated a rapid change of clothing. This done, a swig of neat spirits, a stiff dose of quinine, and all was happily over; but the river was still uncrossed, the obstacles remained still unsurmounted. The only good fortune was that no attack had been made during this time of unpreparedness to meet it.

"It was getting late now, and we were fairly baffled, so the order 'About turn' was given, and with our tails between our legs we disconsolately retraced our steps with all due speed.

Our arrival was only in the nick of time. The river at Fumsu had risen in the incredible way so common out here in the rains, and was now unfordable. It was hours after darkness had fallen when the last man dragged himself over by a rope strained across, and the loads were floated safely to the other side. The wire was, fortunately, up as far as here, so Colonel Willcocks that night received a far from comforting telegram recounting our difficulties, together with the news that we should have to remain a day where we were for fresh orders."

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Make the Attempt

PRAHSU on the 10th of June presented an even more animated scene than on the previous day. A convoy of carriers had arrived from the coast, huts were springing up everywhere, and the place fast assuming the appearance of a well laid out base camp, complete in every detail for the accommodation of troops arriving during June. The telegraph office was working to full capacity to Fumsu in the north and Cape Coast Castle to the south, where its newly appointed base commandant, Lieutenant-Colonel Man-Stuart, C.M.G., was busily attending to every detail. It was with satisfaction that everyone learnt that Captain Melliss with his convoy had left Fumsu for Kwisa at noon that day. This allayed all fear of opposition between Prahsu and Fumsu, of which there had been persistent rumours the previous day; so within a few hours another convoy of ammunition under an escort of fifty men was on its way to Fumsu.

There was plenty of discussion among the officers as to the prospects of saving the Governor now that it was definitely known that he had not succeeded in getting out of Kumasi. Every newcomer had brought in reports as to the ability of the Hausas to stand up against the Ashantis. The Europeans who had left Kumasi before the siege began were, it was stated, sceptical after the first fight with the Ashantis, when Captain Armitage's column was attacked during his search for the Golden Stool, because it was found that one Hausa fired off fifty-two of his sixty rounds of ammunition in a few minutes and at a target he could not possibly have seen. There was Captain Hall's experience, too, for from what had been

gathered he had been repulsed and was in difficulties. On top of this it seemed that Lieutenant-Colonel Carter fared no better, in fact rather worse, for he had been repulsed with very heavy casualties and had to retire to Kwisa, where he now was waiting for help before going on again.

On top of all this there were persistent rumours of the enemy's intention to waylay every convoy leaving the coast, which meant providing strong escorts and trying marches. The morale of the black soldier many believed would not stand this strain, and without the help of white troops the task of relieving the Governor seemed impossible. It was perfectly evident to everybody that the Governor was unable to force the enemy's investment, and unless he could hold out till the arrival of white troops there was little or no hope for him.

Would these white troops be forthcoming? The Secretary of State for the Colonies had been kept informed of the exact state of affairs and the War Office of the difficult position in which the Colonial Office was placed, but beyond this the officers knew very little. Colonel Willcocks was not the man to disclose or discuss his plans.* He kept them to himself, and although it was impossible for him to conceal the serious turn matters had taken, he nevertheless appeared optimistic and had a cheery word for everyone.

Inwardly, however, he realized the terrible task that lay before him. It was, as he had always thought from the beginning, impossible for the Governor to force his way out unaided, and now a new doubt came into his mind whether black troops led by British officers could not be stopped after all. The experience of Lieutenant-Colonel Carter was not encouraging, nor was the bolting of the two soldiers from the fight in which Lieutenant Slater had been engaged. Colonel Willcocks had to admit that the long experience with native troops against the Ashantis was in the present instance even a greater justification for the use of white troops, but it was out of the question to use them at the present moment at the height of the rainy season, and there was nothing for it but

* See *The Relief of Kumasi*, by Captain Biss.

to carry on with native troops and make the attempt with them to save the Governor.

Colonel Willcocks's task was no ordinary one. It was fifteen days since the Governor said he would make his attempt to break out of Kumasi and reach Prahsu. He had failed to do so for reasons which were perfectly obvious. He must, therefore, have help, and at once. Hence every available man was being sent forward with all speed, but the bulk of the reinforcements would not arrive for another ten days. Could the Governor hold on? Colonel Willcocks had already written urging the sending of a message into Kumasi to say that if they could only hold out a little longer help was coming. He himself was coming with three hundred men, half of whom he had already sent forward to join Lieutenant-Colonel Carter's command. He was only waiting for the two thousand Sierra Leone carriers and the actual date of the arrival of the 1st West African Regiment, Captain Eden's* company of the 2nd W.A.F.F., and two more companies from Northern Nigeria. After this information had been received Colonel Willcocks calculated that they would reach Prahsu, the carriers any day and the troops in fourteen and twenty days respectively. These troops would arrive too late to render any effective help, but would act as a valuable reserve.

After dinner, feeling anything but fit, Colonel Willcocks continued to attend to details of his forward movement, when he received a long telegram from Captain Melliss at Fumsu informing him of his inability to advance and that he had returned to Fumsu to await further instructions.

Colonel Willcocks's decision was prompt. "That settles the Governor," one may imagine him thinking, "but what is to be done now? The outcry in England will be too terrible, the responsibility will have to be borne by myself, and here am I helpless to do anything."†

* Brigadier-General A. J. F. Eden, C.M.G., D.S.O.

† "Owing to many reverses in the front and the forces of nature acting against us, it sometimes looked as if the relief of Kumasi might prove a task beyond the powers of the small column at my disposal."—Official Despatches, *London Gazette.*

There was only one thing to be done: order Captain Hall to make the attempt to save the Governor. This could have but one result. It would set free fifteen thousand Ashantis watching Captain Hall at Esumeja. It must then mean the Beckwais going over to the rebels. This would inevitably lead to the Governor and Hall's forces being, if not annihilated, driven back into Kumasi, the Ashanti Goldfields being captured, and Carter and Melliss driven back to Prahsu where defensive lines would have to be taken up until a new advance could be made with white troops during the following dry season.

Whatever he did it seemed that the Governor was doomed, for it was impossible for Kumasi to hold out much longer. If no attempt was made to extend a helping hand to the Governor, the outcry in England could have but one result. It must therefore never be said that nothing was done. Instructions had already been sent to spare no effort to communicate with the Governor, urging him to hold on. But could he? It was already fifteen days after his final date; so, failing this, there was nothing left but to hold out a bribe, and Captain Hall must be given full authority to do the best he could to bribe over the Beckwais or even the Ashantis, if only he could save the Governor.

Taking up his pen, Colonel Willcocks began to write. This is the actual letter.

Camp Prahsu,
June 10, 1900.

Captain Hall or other British officer at Beckwai or its vicinity.

In continuation of my letter of June 8th I now write to say that owing to reports from Lieutenant-Colonel Carter at Kwisa in which he reports "de sixième juin pendant mon avance a Beckwai je recontrai l'ennemi dans de palisades et des entrenchements a Dompuassi. Après une action prolongée dans laquelle nous eprouvions quatre-vingt dix casualties l'ennemi quitta les entrenchements mais les grand nombre de mes blessés et la maigreté de mon ammunition me décida d'y retourner," etc. "J'avais sept casualties parmis mes douze officiers," etc. From this you will see that until the carriers reported from Cape Coast arrive here the Main Column is unable to advance

as there is not a carrier here, all having been sent on to Fumsu with food of which Kwisa is practically deficient. As soon as carriers arrive sufficient to convey reserve ammunition, food, and medical appliances the advance will begin—I expect large reinforcements of men too shortly with which to punish the rebels. Of course, the relief of Kumasi is our main and primary object and to achieve this every other consideration must be subordinated, but why is it I have no kind of news from there? Have you not heard from the Governor or any White Man or other besieged person. Please use every endeavour, by money or other means, to communicate and inform any officer on the line of communications of the state of affairs in Kumasi.

Please remember that you are now the nearest British representative, that you have a good market and supplies, that Beckwai is friendly, and that the British name is involved in this affair; failure to save Kumasi will mean lasting shame on the White Man in the eyes of the natives and if worst comes to worst you must in conjunction with Beckwai (to whom you may promise any reward on any authority) attempt even if not reinforced beforehand and if the garrison calls on you to save the women and children, advance and make the attempt. Everything is being done here to move on and I expect in a very few days to have sufficient carriers to reinforce Lieutenant-Colonel Carter and force a way to Kumasi.

Please pay bearer well on delivery of this.

J. WILLCOCKS, Colonel,
Commanding A.F.F.

Handing his letter over with instructions that it should be sent off at dawn by a special messenger, Colonel Willcocks spent an anxious night wondering what would happen when Captain Hall received the letter in four or five days' time. He hoped in the meantime something might turn up. At any rate, he would see that the local carriers, returning from Fumsu, were sent back again with materials for building a bridge across the Fum.

Captain Mellis at Fumsu was also thinking that night how to cross the Fum. Here is what Captain Biss writes:

"After a night of heavy rain we rose fatigued, but determined to try and do something to remedy yesterday's reverse of June 10th. A survey of the river, which was now higher than

ever, soon showed us that a bridge was out of the question, nor indeed had we any materials with which to construct one. There were no two opinions about it; we must build a raft, which might, if suitably made, have the advantage of portability. Moreover, we knew several other crossings would have to be effected, and, judging by the experience of the previous day, they seemed likely to be worse instead of better.

"A friendly rivalry then began amongst the white men as to who would be the first to devise something suitable. I remember being chaffed with my slowness and being told that the problem had been solved while I was still thinking it over. However, my thinking turned out in the end to be of some use. The raft designed was, nevertheless, not quite a success. It consisted of a platform of planks topping some barrels, a few of which had been found in the store-hut; these latter were the piers, and gave the required buoyancy. They were lashed together with the only rope in the station.

"The structure certainly looked all right ashore, but when launched weak points became noticeable. A couple of nude natives, with long sticks, clambered on top of it and pushed off. Their utmost efforts were quite unavailing against the current, and they were carried down stream. Then something seemed to be going wrong with the raft itself. First, their ankles became submerged, next their knees disappeared from view, then they were waist deep, and at last—yes, swimming! The raft—where was it? Horrors! it had sunk! Not only were the leaking casks gone but the priceless rope which united them.

"We had learnt this much, anyhow: the science of the textbook could very easily be confounded by the freaks of Nature; and she was very unkind here. True, the forest was full of timber, but nearly all of it was so heavy as to have too low a buoyancy for our purposes. The only procurable stuff of the required flotage was sodden with rain, and consequently useless. To get something sufficiently light and dry was what completely nonplussed us. The situation seemed hopelessly akin to thirst in mid-ocean. But help was near at hand, indeed staring us in the face, yet for a long time we could not see it.

"The native huts throughout this country are built on one principal—four sheds facing inwards on a small quadrangle. These have three closed outer sides, and the inner one towards the enclosure open. The walls are often made of mud, plastered over with bamboos, which not only support the gabled roof of leaves and dry grass, but furnish stability to the whole edifice. It was, then, these dry bamboo poles which provided the required material and put an end to our difficulties.

"But a few moments were required to pull down some of the least desirable shanties, and a sufficient quantity of stuff was obtained for our purpose. This was good so far, but how was it to be fastened together without the lost rope? Once again we were like some citizen of Newcastle, shivering with cold because he would not get the coal required to make a fire. One remembered, however, that the bush was interlaced with twining creepers, actually called 'tie-tie' by its inhabitants; which, when their fibres are crushed, serve admirably as lashings if one does not expect much durability.

"Our portable raft was made thus: four bundles of bamboos were tied up, each a carrier's load, and joined together by cross pieces of the same material, so that the mass could be carried by four men like a hammock. This was half of the raft, which needed to be of some length to prevent its head begin forced under water by the strong current. The other half was identical. The two portions could be united, when it was required for use, by two long bamboo poles and got ready for service in a few minutes. The telegraph wire was then torn down by us from the tree on the bank where we were, and lowered on the opposite one by shooting at and breaking the insulator which held it up to a tree on the far side. Thus the wire was brought down to the water level in the form of a gently curving arc, due to the fact that the next insulators were fixed to trees at a considerable distance. One end of the raft was attached to this wire by a noose which worked along it, and this contrivance not only enabled the swiftest streams to be triumphantly crossed and the loads of

rice to be kept dry, but did away with the need of punters, who would either have been useless or have steered everything to wreckage.

"A great load was now taken off our minds, and a delightful sensation of independence possessed us. Yesterday we had been kicking against the pricks and hurt our feet, but to-day the way was clear. So it was with a feeling of relief that the telegraph office was visited, for the purpose of wiring the good news that we could proceed next day."

At Prahsu, telegram in hand, Colonel Willcocks felt a load lifted from his mind. Should he himself advance to Esumeja and make the attempt to save the Governor? No, he would assist Lieutenant-Colonel Carter to advance and carry out this duty, and in order that there should be no failure at Dompuassi this time he would order Captain Hall at Esumeja to co-operate in the forward movement.

Colonel Willcocks accordingly wrote and despatched a letter to Captain Hall. It was mainly in French and in English read as follows:

Camp Prahsu,
June 11, 1900.

SIR,

I send this by a runner thro' the Gold Mines. At present Lieutenant-Colonel Carter is at Kwisa with two hundred and fifty soldiers not counting the wounded. At Fumsu we have fifty soldiers and here two hundred soldiers, but we have no gun. There are no other soldiers in the Colony, except fifty men who are escorting two thousand carriers who are coming from Cape Coast. I await the arrival of five hundred more soldiers, but they cannot arrive for some time. Under these circumstances it is very necessary that you render assistance to Lieutenant-Colonel Carter so that he may reach Beckwai. I understand that the King of Beckwai has two thousand soldiers and recently took the town of Abadom. You should also have enough ammunition to accomplish this object of assisting Carter, as I think you have only had one fight at Kokofu with few losses. Do not forget that you alone have many soldiers and much food and here on the line of communications we have only sufficient for Kwisa and Fumsu and each carrier has to fight on the way as well as carrying food.

There is need of great efforts if we wish to save our prestige and the besieged women and children.

Our greatest difficulty here is the lack of carriers and until these arrive, which cannot be for five days, I demand that you make a great effort to render assistance to Carter so that he may arrive at Beckwai.

J. WILLCOCKS, Colonel,
Commanding Ashanti Field Force.

Colonel Willcocks, in his anxiety to write and get off this letter as quickly as possible so as to catch up the previous one, had obviously overlooked some units, and as for the two thousand Beckwais, that was a guess on his part. In his letter of the previous night he was animated by only one desire, and that was to have an attempt made, whatever the consequences, to save the Governor. In his subsequent letter it was to be an attempt that might have some prospect of success, now that the means of getting up men, ammunition, and food had been solved by the successful crossing of the Fum. Colonel Willcocks calculated that the four or five days which must elapse before Captain Hall could receive and act on his last letter would give ample time for the concentration to be effected at Kwisa of every available man.*

When Captain Beddoes with a hundred men of his company got off from Prahsu for Kwisa, Colonel Willcocks, feeling somewhat relieved at the turn events had taken, fervently hoped that a message had been got into Kumasi and that, if only Captain Hall supported him, all might yet be well.

* "To assist Lieutenant-Colonel Carter I sent Captain (local Major) Melliss, 1st W.A.F.F., with one hundred and fifty men from Prahsu, and followed this by another hundred, my last reserve."—Colonel Willcocks, Official Despatches, *London Gazette*.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

High Hopes

"WHY won't Kwisa come on, Haslewood? This strain on you all cannot go on. It is now five days since the Governor wrote that letter to the Colonial Secretary."

Captain Haslewood had just reported to me at Esumeja that there were still no signs of the Governor coming out and that the indications at Kokofu were that the Ashantis were still preparing to attack us.

The officers and British N.C.O.s were keenly alive to the whole situation. Everybody was on the alert. Dawn broke on June 9th with the troops in position. The patrols and scouts penetrating the thick undergrowth of forest trees, soaked by torrential rains, an occasional exchange of shots, a casualty or two, and by midday all was serene, awaiting some sign or news of the troops in our rear.

A little before 4 p.m. a shout went out.

"A messenger, a messenger!"

He was guided to me, panting and exhausted, and handed me an official envelope, addressed to me in French. I read:

Kumasi,
juin 4, 1900.

L'officier commandant les trouppes sur la route de Kumasi

MONSIEUR LE COMMANDANT,

J'ai fait plusieurs tentatives infructueuses pour vous faire parvenir de nos nouvelles, mais aujourd'hui j'ai remis entres les mains d'un homme qui espère franchir les lignes des rebelles avec succés, une copie de la lettre que je vous ai adressé, le 4 mai, lettre à laquelle j'ai ajouté un post-scriptum. Le porteur de la presente pense aussi

reussir a vous parvenir et a rapporter une reponse. Il y a à present ici une garrison de sept cents Haoussas sous les ordres du Major Morris, D.S.O., Acting-Commissioner et Commandant des Northern Territories. Tous les Européans, les employés, et tous les Haoussas sont maintenant à la demi ration et nous pouvons tenir encore pendant une semaine a partir d'aujourd'hui.

Il est de toute necessité que vous arrivez dans ce delai, en apportant avec vous des vivres et des munitions. Les munitions que nous avons ici ne nous permettent pas de prendre d'offensive et nous devons les conserver au cas ou vous n'arriverez pas en temps utile et ou nous serions obligés de nous faire jour.

J'apprendre que votre marche sur Kumasi sera retardés par un grand nombre de rebelles, qui ont construit des stockades en travers de la route et ont aussi abattu des arbres par endroits. Tout autour de Kumasi sont des stockades, qui, offrant un bon abri aux rebeles, sont défendues par eux avec la plus grande energie. Le Capitaine Aplin, commandant les Haoussas de Lagos, qui sont arrivés ici le 29 avril, a été obligé de prendre d'assaut deux stockades en route, et n'a reussi a emporter la seconde que par une attaque de flanc.

Vous verrez aussi que les rebelles se cachent aussi dans les arbres qui dominent la route et tirent de là sur les troupes.

La santé dans le camp est bonne mais la population indigène, au nombre de 3,000 environ, est dans un état de dénuement absolu et en suite un prompt secours est urgent.

F. M. HODGSON,
Governor.

A few questions to the messenger; a pause, thinking, "*Une semaine*, a week; two days from to-day." The situation was too urgent to admit of a moment's delay. I would submit my own plan to Colonel Willcocks and to ensure that he got it an escort and guide would be sent with it and the Governor's letter. This plan was the only possible one in the circumstances and in my opinion offered the best chance of success.

The first stage was the concentration of the troops in our rear at Beckwai and, as opposition from the Adansis might be expected, two separate columns converging on Beckwai should be sent up. This would ensure one or both reaching Beckwai. Esumeja is due south of Kumasi, and Beckwai five miles south-west of Esumeja.

The second stage was that under cover of the troops at Esumeja holding the Ashanti army at Kokofu, for a flank march to be made from Beckwai, via Pekki, to Kumasi with such stores, food, etc., as could be got ready in time. Pekki was fourteen miles north-west of Beckwai. Kumasi was eight miles north-east of Pekki (four hours for troops). Kokofu was 3,100 yards due east of Esumeja. Pekki was in Beckwai territory; the Beckwais were loyal there.

The third stage was:

(*a*) To withdraw the Governor, the white ladies, and civil population from Kumasi to the coast via friendly Denkera country.

(*b*) To withdraw the existing garrison in Kumasi and to place a hundred fresh troops in the Fort there with sufficient food and ammunition for one month.

(*c*) To make the return flank march to Beckwai with such of the old garrison of Kumasi as were not required to escort the Governor and civil population to the coast.

(*d*) To make a united attack on Kokofu as soon as all the necessary preparations had been made.

Giving instructions for the messenger to be fed and accommodated and ordering an escort of three soldiers and a native guide to be got ready at once, I sat down and wrote a letter. Here is the official office copy:

From Captain W. M. Hall, Commanding Advanced Troops.
To the Officer Commanding Troops.

Esumeja,
June 9, 1900, 4 p.m.

Pressing.

1. The enclosed letters (copy) have just been brought in from Kumasi.

2. Seeing how desperate is the state of affairs I would request or advise that every consideration be given to this letter and that such troops as can be pushed up be sent with all despatch to Beckwai.

3. Troops in rear of Fumsu should march direct on Beckwai.

4. The rations for Europeans here are almost exhausted, and although the soldiers are living on the country I have only ninety-four bags of rice with me and about three hundred rounds per man (two hundred and forty-eight men here), with one gun, 75 mm.

5. I cannot move on with my present strength as I have no food for such numbers as are in Kumasi, and the moment I move Kokofu would cut off my rear and attack Beckwai.

6. Why I have suggested the concentration at Beckwai is that there is another road at present open to within four hours of Kumasi which would avoid the route occupied and strongly fortified by the rebels, a force retained here and making a feint along the main road would prevent the rebels at Kokofu from coming over and interfering with the other column.

W. MONTAGU HALL,
Captain.

The escort with a guide was ordered to proceed with all speed via Beckwai and Obuassi to Fumsu, there to hand over the letters to the officer commanding that station and to obtain a written receipt.

After receiving the evening reports and learning that Dompuassi on the main path was still held by the Adansis, a conference of the officers was called. Those present besides myself were: Captains Anderson, Haslewood, and Wilson, Lieutenant Edwards, Dr. Barker, and Mr. Claude Dahne.

I first read the Governor's letter, in French, with due apologies for my faulty pronunciation, and then proceeded to explain it.

"The Europeans, employees, and all Hausas in Kumasi are now on half rations. They can hold out till June 11th, that is the day after to-morrow. I take this to mean on half-rations till then. The letter also states that it is 'of all necessity' that we arrive with food and ammunition within that period. This I also take to mean we should arrive, not definitely must. The third point to be noted is that there is no ammunition available for offensive operations, from which I infer that they do not consider themselves in any danger of an attack being made on Kumasi and this view is confirmed by the messengers, that all was quiet in Kumasi, the people going about as usual with no fear of the Ashantis leaving their stockades and attacking the town.

"The next point, however," I went on, "is the vital question. All the available ammunition is being kept in case they have

to break out owing to our non-arrival in useful time. This word 'useful' I think means that they will hang on in Kumasi until the very last moment without impairing their military efficiency. It cannot be many days after the 11th of June, as the Governor ends his letter by saying that the three thousand civil population are in absolute want and thus prompt help is urgent."

This point was then discussed at some length and the general concensus of opinion arrived at was a week—to June 18th as the latest day.

I next reviewed the situation in our rear.

"You know," I said, "the circumstances under which D Company was sent back. We know that they defeated the Adansis at Dompuassi and Donovan arrived at Obuassi with his armed police soon after. Since then firing has been reported in the neighbourhood of Kwisa and at the present moment Dompuassi is again held by the Adansis. This looks as if D Company is trying to keep the main path open for Colonel Willcocks's command. Where is it and what does it consist of? You will remember, gentlemen, that Sub-Assistant Commissioner Donovan wrote saying that when he left Fumsu on May 29th three hundred troops were there and Colonel Willcocks with seven hundred more was following close up. This is eleven days ago, but not a word more of the present whereabouts of these one thousand men or a letter of any kind. This, too, looks as if Colonel Willcocks is adhering to his methodical method and is not going to be rushed. The thousand troops are probably still between Fumsu and Prahsu. That is all I can tell you about the position in our rear. You known the position in Kumasi and Captain Haslewood will now give you his latest figures of the numbers and positions of the enemy."

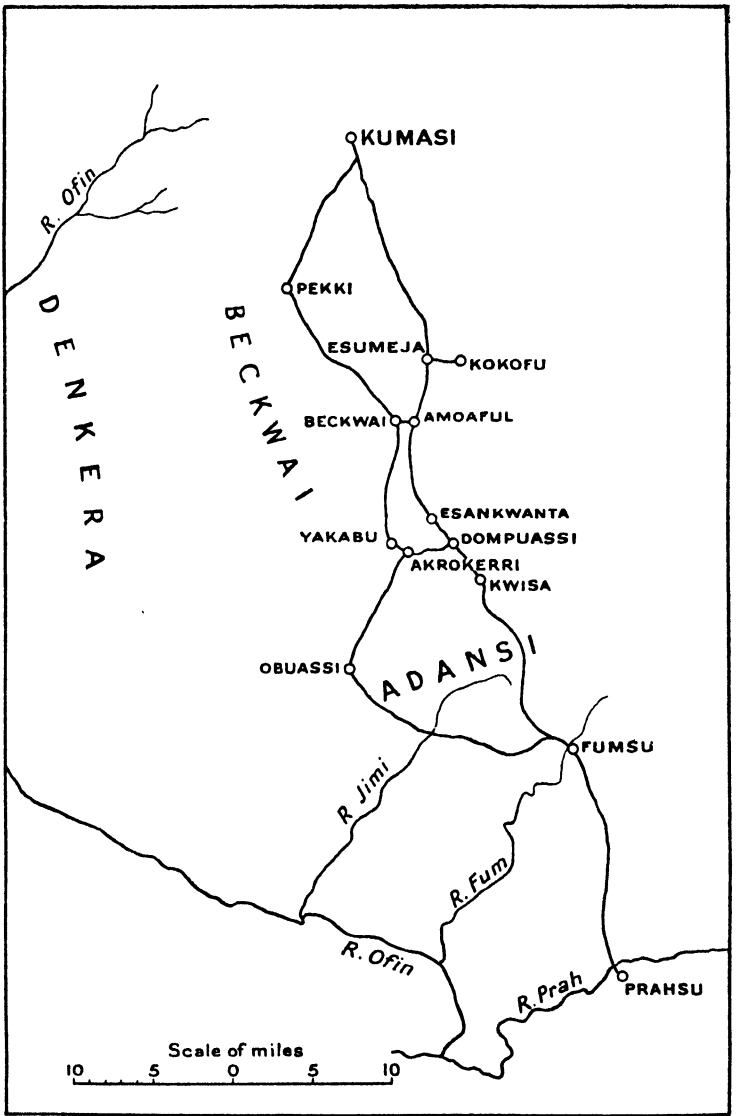
Captain Haslewood, taking out a notebook, began by referring to the arrival of messengers from Kumasi which had enabled him to verify with some degree of accuracy the statements made by our own Intelligence Service and spies who had served us so well. He had been able to establish that all the roads leading out of Kumasi had been stockaded and strongly held, but were now only held by detachments without local reserves and two war camps established, one near the main

Cape Coast to Kumasi road close to Kumasi, occupied by a thousand Kumassis, and a second war camp on the south-west side of Kumasi and just north of the Pekki-Kumasi road which was occupied by two thousand Achimas. He had no information as to war camps on the north and east sides.

With regard to Kokofu, the five war camps there were occupied by the following: Ejissu army of Queen Ashantuah, six thousand; the Ofinsus, three thousand; the Achimas, one contingent, two thousand; contingents of Ahafus, Wankis, Bechims and Inkwantas, four thousand, and Kumassis, five thousand. Coming further south there was a war camp at Dompuassi held by the Adansis. He was glad to say that the Adansis of the southern half of their kingdom were still loyal. With regard to the Beckwais, three hundred were holding Esan Kwanta for us. There was no hope of getting more and we had to take into consideration the possibility of a hostile Beckwai army in the event of a serious reverse. He added that no reply had yet been received from the Denkeras, but his information was that they would act according to what the Beckwais did.

Then, unfolding his map on a small table while the others closed in around, Captain Haslewood, placing his forefinger on Fumsu, traced the path via Obuassi, Beckwai, and Pekki to Kumasi.

"This is open," he said, "to within eight miles of Kumasi. Colonel Willcocks has only then to deal with the two thousand Achimas, the detachments at the stockades, and possibly the thousand Kumassis on the main Kumasi road. It is a flank march, the path opposite Dompuassi being only three miles away. Of course if we were attacked and defeated at Esumeja there would be an end of Kumasi, but if a simultaneous advance was made from Kwisa and Fumsu to Beckwai and the garrison at Esumeja considerably strengthened, it offers every chance of getting to Kumasi in time. This plan has been sent to Colonel Willcocks this afternoon. With luck he ought to be up at Beckwai on the 13th and Kumasi on the 14th or 15th. It will be a close thing and if successful a glorious achievement for all concerned."



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"But suppose the Governor does come out on the 11th or 12th?" Captain Wilson ejaculated.

Captain Haslewood looked up at me.

"Yes," I said, "I have had that possibility in mind. In that case we shall be forced to attack Kokofu, for as soon as the Governor's troops began attacking the stockades on the main Cape Coast to Kumasi road the thousand Kumassis there would call up help from Kokofu. If our attack on Kokofu was timed correctly, I am very hopeful of securing the Governor's retirement here. You know that every Ashanti is looking and waiting the result of the fight between Queen Ashantuah and ourselves. The old lady is not likely to let her fighting men leave Kokofu."

I concluded by pointing out how important it was for the next few days to exercise extreme vigilance and to watch and listen for any signs from Kumasi, for which purpose we must establish listening posts as near Kumasi as possible and use every possible means to get ample warning in time.

The conference disposed of, there remained the nature of the reply to be sent to the Governor by his messenger; so next morning, June 10th, I sent for the man and, with the native head of the Intelligence Service, plied him with question after question. I was impressed with the intelligence he displayed and the complete grasp he had of the present situation. He had volunteered not only to bring a message from the Governor to me, but to take back my reply. His reasons were that he had many friends and relations in Kumasi; they were in great need of food. They knew the relieving troops were so near. He would make his effort to get the troops up before it was too late. His one condition was that the message should be extremely small, so that if he was in danger he could get rid of it and thus have no incriminating evidence. He would then report verbally what information he himself had been able to obtain. I could not help admiring the man and my further questioning elicited that he knew the position at Kokofu, the position in Adansi, in fact practically everything. I felt inclined to trust the man, so asked him point blank what he would do if he were in my place. His answer was most

emphatic: "Keep Queen Ashantuah away from Kumasi, but do hurry up the Big White Colonel from Fumsu. You must see we will die if he doesn't come quick."

I then hinted another question, the possibility of breaking out of Kumasi. He was horrified at the idea.

"Never, never! we will all die or be human sacrificed."

I told him he had seven hundred Hausas.

"Yes," came the reply. "They would be guarding the Governor and the white ladies, the civil population would have to follow behind without Hausas, in single file quite five miles long, with their belongings on their heads. What chance had they? The Ashantis, rushing in from the undergrowth, could do what they liked with them."

I felt a shiver down my spine. I knew he was right; no use whatever. Then came my final question.

"I am waiting for news from the Big White Colonel; when must you start back?"

"Not later than noon to-morrow, the earlier the better."

I agreed and promised to have my reply ready.

We were doomed to a disappointment next morning, June 11th, by the return of one of the messengers we had sent off to Kumasi on June 2nd. It appeared that he and his companion separated and in the darkness he came upon one of the stockades outside Kumasi, occupied by the enemy. He worked round to try and avoid it, but suddenly stumbled into an enclosure of low palm-leaf shelters under which Ashantis were crouched around small glowing fires. His impulse was to throw away the message and go around, but not liking to do that and believing that the other messenger had got through, he decided to bring the messages back. He was very sorry and would be willing to take another message if it was made very small. He handed me the messages.

I decided to retain my own code message and to send a tiny copy of the message attached to it by the other messenger, who was now waiting to start, and as no news from our rear had come in, I could only deal with the situation as it existed here. The messenger himself would be able to amplify it, and when news of my rear did arrive, the original messenger

would be available. My short message must point out that I was in no position to furnish food and ammunition. It should also be able to verify the information the messenger himself would give. The Governor, knowing that Kokofu was alongside Esumeja and called rebels, would know who the rebels there were, and by mentioning Adansis only as rebels he would know that the Beckwais and Denkeras were still loyal and we must be protecting them from the rebels at Kokofu. The messenger's information was thus correct and the Governor would be able to act on it when Kumasi, for want of food, must be evacuated. I dared not put everything in writing, even in French. The risks were too great and the stake so vital.

I thereupon wrote in French:

Esumeja,
Le 11th juin.

À Monsieur le Gouverneur,

J'ai reçu deux lettres de 4 juin, ils ont été envoyé à Fumsu. Kwisa se tient à nos soldats mais les Adansis et les Kokofu sont rebelles. Il y a ici deux cents et quarante huit soldats et un fusil 75 mm.

Je ne me comprends pas la lettre qui l'attache, nous n'avons pas réçus aucune des lettres de le Colonel Willcocks ou un homme blanche après de 2 juin.

Peu des vivres ici mais ne rien pas pour Europeans, les munitions suffice pour son usage de soldats ici.

Je me entende que soldats à venir (un mille quatre cents), et (rumoured) que trois cent sont à Fumsu en route de Kwisa le 29 mai et la reste est vient sans délai.

After signing and having an office copy made, I was about to call the messenger in, when the native head of the Intelligence Service entered with a note saying, "A message from the King of Beckwai, sir."

Reading it and jumping up joyfully, I handed it to Captain Haslewood.

"Here's good news; read it!"

He looked glum.

"Can't see the good news; they are coming to attack us this week!"

"Never mind, old man; tell the Beckwai messenger to wait and let's have the Governor's messenger in."

He was given the two tiny messages and, turning to the native head of the Intelligence Service, I said:

"Please be very accurate in interpreting this note I have in my hand. It is written by Mr. Jones, the native missionary, on behalf of the King of Beckwai. It is dated this morning, June 11th; it says, 'I am requested by the King to inform you what message he has this morning received by express messengers from Pekki as news from Achima camp.' Has he got that?"

The messenger nodded.

"He knows where the Achima camp is?"

"North of the Pekki–Kumasi road," the reply came.

"I will now continue. 'The Achimas say that you (meaning myself) are at Esumeja doing nothing peculiar which way frightens them and will therefore proceed on during this week to fight with you.' Ask the messenger to tell me exactly what it means to him."

The reply came: "Every Ashanti knows you say that Queen Ashantuah will run away from Kokofu. The last Achimas are coming this week to help Queen Ashantuah to drive you away from Esumeja before the new soldiers come up. They must be very near and the Achimas be very quick."

"Quite right. Please repeat to him the words 'this week.' To-day is Monday, therefore Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday makes June 17th, this week."

The messenger nodded approvingly.

"Now ask him to tell me if these last Achimas go to fight Esumeja, what would it mean to him and his three thousand friends in Kumasi."

The man hesitated, then in an animated voice I received the interpretation that "if the Big White Colonel with his soldiers does not come up in time and you do not run away at Esumeja, all can come out from Kumasi through Achima and Denkera country to the coast."

"Splendid, you've got it. Can I leave it to you to keep this secret and only make it known when the time comes that something has to be done or you will all starve?"

He nodded.

"Now be off; get back to Kumasi as quickly as possible, keep an eye on the Achimas, and if you have to choose between the messages and yourself, destroy the messages."

Then, shaking hands with him and wishing him God-speed, I sent him off.

I asked Captain Haslewood to drop a line thanking the King of Beckwai for his note and to tell him to have his spies out watching the Achima war camp and to let us know at once when they start moving to Kokofu.

Then, having told the native head of the Intelligence Service to see that the messenger who had failed with our code messages had food and was kept ready to go off again, I went out, just as the reliefs were being marched off to their posts, to have a look at the outer defences, joining the party going along the path to Kokofu. I halted it just outside the extreme edge of the enclosure of Esumeja to inspect the maxim gun detachment placed there. An enormous cotton-tree was lying on the ground at right angles to the path. It was so large that I could not see over the top of it. At our side the small emplacement had been built for the maxim gun and underneath it its shelter from the rain. On either side of it were two low lean-tos covered with palm leaves for the detachments. Ordering the machine guns to be placed in position, I mounted and sat on the tripod saddle. I was enchanted with the view before me. There were vistas in several directions. At the end of each vista an open space had been cleared, letting in the light from the sky above and giving each vista the appearance of a long tunnel. Our scouts could be seen moving about and I was satisfied that the Achimas would receive a warm welcome here.

Ordering the party to advance we soon reached our advanced post. It was the support to the scouts and sentries watching the cross roads about half a mile from Esumeja and a little over a mile from Kokofu. This post, too, had a lean-to shelter of palm leaves on our side of another large cotton-tree, standing nearly two hundred feet high. A tiny loft had been built well up the tree for the sentry to watch.

The native N.C.O. commenced to hand over to the relieving N.C.O. and both moved forward with the relieving sentries. I accompanied them. The sentries were exchanged, being posted in pairs under the shelter of tall trees, each one taking turns to climb the tree to observe the scouts sent constantly to watch for any movement of the enemy.

The two native N.C.O.s then went on. I followed. I noticed one was pointing out to the other something in the undergrowth. On inquiry I was informed that they were their own alarm signals and that further on the Ashantis had their own, too. "We will show you."

About a hundred yards further on, right in the middle of the path, was stuck in the ground a wooden idol.

"Ashanti juju," they said.

I bent down to remove it. They pulled me back and uncovering a few leaves, a muzzle of a Dane gun was seen pointing upwards, the trigger of which was cunningly connected to the wooden idol. Needless to say the trophy was secured, but much misgiving aroused by its removal.

Marching back with the relieved party and the trophy, we saw little or no signs of our maxim gun ambush, although it was actually manned for our benefit. I was well satisfied with it. On reaching the fringe of the enclosure I stopped. I could not help admiring the peacefulness of the village, set in its background of enormous jungle trees. The sky was grey and overcast; it was nearing the height of the rainy season and a bluish mixture of mist and smoke was slowly rising. To my right on an eminence stood the Rest House with its little group of outbuildings, from one of which the muzzle of the 75-mm. gun could almost be discerned. The outline further right sloped sharply to the opening in the trees, through which was the road to Kumasi, while the outline to the left of the Rest House gradually sloped downwards to an open space, then on to a group of native huts with thatched palm-leaf roofs and finally on to an opening in the forest, the Cape Coast and Beckwai road. The whole length of the village was not more than eighty yards.

Standing where I was it looked so easy to rush and capture.

Could we, two hundred and forty-eight all told, hold it against the twenty thousand Ashantis at this very moment only 3,100 yards away? I know I ought to enclose the place with a strong stockade. Bother the official textbooks on fortification. Picture the Achimas telling Queen Ashantuah to come and attack us at once. The White Captain is frightened at last; he has locked himself in at Esumeja. We will burn him out.

This won't do; the moral sacrifice is too great; the initiative must be retained.

My thoughts stopped. I saw something white moving at the Rest House. I looked again; I recognized Captain Haslewood waving a piece of paper. Another letter! I fairly ran.

"Where from?" I gasped.

"Obuassi."

I opened it and read:

Obuassi,
June 9, 1900.

To Captain Hall, Esumeja.

DEAR SIR,

Your letter to Captain Donovan and that addressed O.C. Kwisa reached us here at 3 o'clock to-day. Captain Donovan having left, our Superintendent opened and read them, and has asked me to reply.

1. Your letter to Kwisa will be forwarded to-morrow morning via Fumsu.

2. Mr. Burke, who has taken Captain Donovan's place, wishes me to inform you that Colonel Carter, Major Wilkinson, Major Cramer, Lieutenants O'Malley, Edwards, Shortland, and another with about four hundred and fifty men and two maxims left Fumsu for Kwisa on Saturday morning, June 2nd (a week ago). He was present at their departure.

3. Colonel Willcocks with about four hundred men was expected to reach Fumsu on 6th inst.

4. We have absolutely no local news here.

5. Mafeking was relieved and Roberts is in Johannesburg.

Yours truly,
GEO. B. HICKSON.*

* Surgeon-Major G. B. Hickson, R.A.M.C.

This letter seemed quite clear. Lieutenant-Colonel Carter was definitely located at Kwisa and with our own command already there had a total force of six hundred and forty. Five days ago Colonel Willcocks was expected at Fumsu with four hundred more. He must have gone to Kwisa by now. The firing we heard reported in that neighbourhood was evidently Colonel Willcocks clearing the Adansis out before coming on to Beckwai. The escort with the Governor's message would have arrived at Fumsu today and would perhaps be at Kwisa to-morrow. Kwisa was only eleven miles from Beckwai. Colonel Willcocks would certainly answer the Governor's appeal and be at Beckwai to-morrow or next day with his thousand men. I ought to let the Governor know this and especially his messenger, for I felt certain that the messenger, as soon as he found the Achimas out of the way, would get the Governor to break out. This would necessarily be a desperate enterprise and should only be attempted as a last resort.

I reasoned that if my calculations were correct, namely that Colonel Willcocks would be at Beckwai the next day or the day after, Kumasi might be relieved within a few days, and if so we must stop the attempt to break out by sending off our messenger here with a message for Kumasi and if possible a verbal communication to the Governor's messenger already on his way. The difficulty was whether we could feel certain that Colonel Willcocks would be at Beckwai and even if he was whether he would want to dispose of Kokofu first or carry out our scheme of a flank march. It would be cruel to give the Governor a definite date of our arrival in Kumasi unless it was practically certain. On the other hand, we must not let them go through the terrible ordeal of breaking out if there was a hope of being in time. I had got to make a quick decision, for we must try to catch up with the Governor's messenger who had already been sent off.

I quickly realized that a definite statement was impossible. It must only generalize and the Governor and his messenger, who left earlier that morning, must use their own discretion when to take advantage of the favourable situation that appeared

to exist for successfully breaking out of Kumasi into friendly Denkera country. I thereupon wrote on a small piece of paper:

Esumeja,
June 11th.

Information troops close up hope general advance within week's time.

W. MONTAGU HALL,
Captain.

Captain Haslewood summoned the native head of Intelligence and our messenger, who had volunteered to make a second attempt. The message was folded neatly and sewn into the hem of his cloth. He was promised a reward of £20 if he brought back the acknowledgment. Turning to the native head, I said:

"I want you to be very careful and accurate in interpreting what I want this man to do. He must try his utmost to catch up the Governor's messenger and tell him that over a thousand soldiers should be coming to Beckwai to-morrow or next day, but the White Captain at Esumeja does not know when they will come to Kumasi; perhaps five days, perhaps ten days, perhaps longer."

When I had made certain that the man understood I sent him off and wished him good luck. Then I told Haslewood to get a message off as soon as he could to the King of Beckwai for we had to arrange for the coming of Colonel Willcocks

"Tell him," I said, "to have ready at Beckwai a supply of food for a thousand troops coming there and to issue a proclamation about our successes in South Africa. Don't forget to point out that Major-General Baden-Powell was in command at Mafeking and they will remember him coming to Beckwai. Just fancy a thousand men only eleven miles from Beckwai! I will go and tell the others the news and warn them to be on their guard from Kokofu."

The native head of the Intelligence Service was sent back to Esan Kwanta to inform the levies there of an early advance from Kwisa and a possible engagement at Dompuassi. He was given a note from me to hand to the Officer Commanding to the effect that I would come and report to him at Beckwai

as soon as intelligence had reached me of his arrival and that the King of Beckwai had already been instructed to supply food for his troops on their arrival at Beckwai.

That evening there was a cheery gathering at mess. We were to have a gala dinner. Three squares of compressed dessicated vegetable had been discovered; so it began well and even ended better by quite an ample supply of tea tabloids and a few saccharine ones. The principle subject of conversation was what would Willcocks do, the flank march, or smash up Queen Ashantuah. We toasted in tea Lord Roberts and Major-General Baden-Powell. We felt we were really winning at last.

We turned in early, to rise early. It might be our day; now or never for Queen Ashantuah!

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Hopes Waning

WHAT had happened! Why would not Lieutenant-Colonel Carter come on? It was now two days since we had the definite information that Lieutenant-Colonel Carter had left Fumsu for Kwisa with four hundred and fifty men on Saturday morning, June 2nd, eleven days ago and still no signs of him. Everything was so mysterious; no sign from Kumasi, Kokofu silent, reports from Esan Kwanta that Dompuassi was silent. It was puzzling. Lieutenant-Colonel Carter must surely come soon.

At 5.30 p.m. that day, the 13th of June, our hopes were raised by the arrival of a letter addressed to Lieutenant-Colonel Carter or Captain Hall at Beckwai. I opened it and immediately saw that it was from Colonel Willcocks himself. The address from which it was dated gave me an unpleasant shock—Camp Prahsu! So he had not got to Fumsu! I read the letter already quoted in Chapter XIV, which for the convenience of the reader is here repeated:

To Lieutenant-Colonel Carter, or any British officer, Beckwai.

Camp Prahsu,
7 p.m., June 8, 1900.

The bearer brought and delivered a telegram from some Civil Officer to Director Telegraphs, Cape Coast. He arrived in five days from Beckwai and promises return in five days leaving to-morrow —I have given him one pound and if he delivers this give him £2 more for doing so. I understand Lieutenant-Colonel Carter, Lieutenant-Colonel Wilkinson, and Captain Hall are at or in the vicinity of Beckwai, but no letter or message has been received from Carter or Wilkinson, altho messages from private individuals keep coming in; this has puzzled me as I can form no estimate of

the military situation. I am here with one hundred and fifty W.A.F.F.s but no gun; another hundred and fifty are at Fumsu as there is absolutely no food here and none to be purchased, but as I have only arrived two hours ago I cannot give any certain opinion on this matter. As far as I can gather Colonel Carter has about four hundred and fifty troops and two guns available for his advance to Kumasi, and Beckwai might possibly furnish enough food for the advance to relieve Kumasi as well as some sort of scouts and general helpers. I have here only sufficient rice to feed my troops of followers for a few days and no reserve. Two hundred bags of rice and four salt leave to-morrow for Fumsu; everything available has been or is being sent up to the troops in front. I expect two thousand carriers in five days from Cape Coast; these are Sierra Leone men and fit to take on fighting duty and the day they arrive I am ready to advance taking with me enough food to ration stations *en route* as well as the garrison of Kumasi, who I understand will be very short of supplies—I have absolutely no information to work on, hence I cannot say if my estimates are correct or not—I take it that to advance to Kumasi merely with soldiers and without any food would be of little use and only hamper movements; also I have only one hammock between every two white men and no carriers for wounded.

2. Under all the above circumstances unless I receive some kind of message from the front, from Carter, Wilkinson, Hall or other European asking for urgent help, I think it best to wait arrival of carriers from Cape Coast and then advance rapidly and be in a position to really assist the garrison, bringing along the women and others not wanted as well as wounded.

3. If you find yourself in a position which you consider obliges you to wait my arrival before attempting the relief of Kumasi you will wait till I come; rest assured I will not be a day later than I am obliged to and we can then attack and disperse any body of Ashantis that may be met *en route*. Only at any cost or bribe inform Garrison Kumasi that I am coming if they will only hold on and that nothing will stop us and that food and supplies of ammunition will come in plenty. As you are aware on my arrival at Cape Coast I found no reserve of food or carriers and no arrangements for either; hence everything has had to be arranged since my arrival and this is the cause of delay. The local carrier supply has been a farce; I have not a word of news from Kumasi nor from anyone later than May 29th and under such circumstances everything has been done

that can be done. By any means in your power inform Kumasi and I can say no more than that in all other details I trust you to act with sound common sense; losing no opportunity of effecting the relief of Kumasi but risking no chance of a reverse or running short of food if they can wait till I come with three hundred men and plenty of food.

4. I have no field gun; if you can send the 75-mm. gun or a 7-pounder down to meet me I shall be glad and with this I feel sure my advance would be much eased; but if you cannot do this without danger I will work my way up without.

5. I cannot believe that any number of Ashantis can stop the advance of troops led by British officers.

J. WILLCOCKS, Colonel,
Commanding Ashanti F. Force.

I was horribly disappointed. Everybody seemed to be waiting for everybody else. I could only hope that Colonel Willcocks would act up to his letter when he received the Governor's urgent appeal.

"If there are no signs by to-morrow night of their coming," I said to Haslewood, "we must find means to get Lieutenant-Colonel Carter's command up. Kumasi must be relieved within five days."

A knock at the door. The native head entered. He reported that he had just got back from Esan Kwanta. There everything was quiet, but some of the Beckwai levies had moved to the village of Yakabu, to the west, on the southern boundary of the Beckwai country. The kit of D Company was still in charge of the headman of Esan Kwanta. The Adansis were still at Dompuassi. There were no signs of the troops from Kwisa nor any sound of firing heard. His assistant had been left at Esan Kwanta with my note for the Officer Commanding.

Mess that evening was a dreary affair. Yam and rice were not conducive to conviviality and the uncertainty of the situation was beginning to have its effect. Somebody suggested "Bed, while there is a chance."

"Good God," cried another, "stick that damn, infernal drumming going on around Kokofu and those damn Dane guns! Oh, damn it, I'm on duty too to-night; why the hell can't we go for the old lady and have done with it?"

I whispered to Dr. Barker, "Keep an eye on him; he is in for a go of fever. Stop it if you can, we shall be in a hole if he's not kept fit for duty."

Back came the whisper, "Thirty grains as soon as I get the chance," amidst a heated argument as to who was the orderly officer, tactfully carried on by another who had realized the situation and was determined to get the fellow to bed. He was persuaded to go, shaking his fist at Kokofu and everything in general, with Dr. Barker quietly following. Needless to say, we all shared the duty that night.

There was no doubt of the exceptionally defiant war drumming; everyone remarked on it and wondered if it meant the expected attack on us. I was puzzled, as assurances were given me by the King of Beckwai that the moment the Achimas moved from their war camp north of Pekki to carry out their threat to attack us, I would be at once informed. Not a word. By 3 a.m. the war drumming had died down.

June 14th. Four days left. Everybody was on the alert, but no attack came, nor any indication of the approach of the Achimas. All reports that day confirmed the view that the Achimas had not crossed the Kumasi–Cape Coast road to the east. In the afternoon one of the native Intelligence returned from Esan Kwanta and reported that Dompuassi was still held by the Adansis and that there were no signs of the troops from Kwisa coming up or any sounds of firing heard. What was the reason of this delay? I felt certain that both Captain Beamish and Colour-Sergeant Mackenzie would move heaven and earth to bring back help to Esumeja, knowing the terrible odds we were up against; so I could only conclude that Lieutenant-Colonel Carter was either hesitating to force a passage through Dompuassi, which he must know to be held by the Adansis, or, what was much more likely, that Colonel Willcocks had sent him instructions to halt at Kwisa and await his arrival. I had already been disappointed once; it would not do to run the risk of a second disappointment, so I had to be prepared to act in case the Ashanti Field Force was delayed. There were only two courses open to me, either to get the Achimas out of the way so as to give the Governor every chance of suc-

cessfully breaking out into Denkera country, or to force Dompuassi and bring up Lieutenant-Colonel Carter's command to make the flank march to Kumasi and strengthen Esumeja.

Seeing Captain Wilson flash by, I jumped up and ran after him.

"Hi, Wilson, I want to have a word with you, are you busy? Come for a stroll so that we shall not be overheard."

We strolled up and down beyond the village.

"You must see things are black," I began. "To-day is the 14th. We thought Kumasi might hold out till the 18th; that would be a week longer than they said they could hold out when they were already in a desperate state. It seems pretty clear that Willcocks will not be up in time; the Governor will be forced to break out before help can possibly arrive. The responsibility, whatever happens, must rest on my shoulders. The thought of those white ladies and the three thousand civilians is dreadful. We've got to help, whatever it means. It is not sufficient to keep the Ashantis at Kokofu away from Kumasi, we must get the Achimas, north of Pekki, away or hold them so that a clear line of retreat is open to the Governor; that is the only hope."

"You want me to go to Pekki and take the Achimas on?" Wilson asked.

I did not reply. There was an awkward pause.

"Of course I'll volunteer with my company for any duty you consider best," he said finally, "but it will mean suicide for you at Esumeja. You would not last twenty-four hours. The Beckwais would be up and a wedge driven in between Willcocks coming up and the Governor coming out. God help the women and children and the three thousand civilians. It would be a terrible tragedy and the probable loss of Ashanti for ever.

"You don't mind my saying all this; honestly, in my view it would be madness, but don't think for one moment that I am not willing to go."

I thanked him and said that I absolutely agreed with every word he said; so that scheme was off. Then I asked him what he thought of another plan to get the Achimas out of the way.

"You know," I said, "the Achimas are supposed to be coming to attack us this week. They may have changed their minds. We must be prepared for that and act accordingly. You remember what a hullaballoo there was when D Company made a retrograde movement; it brought hundreds from around Kumasi to destroy us and a panic for the King of Beckwai. Why not repeat the experiment? There are only the Achimas, who are longing to attack us, and one thousand Kumasis on the main Cape Coast to Kumasi road left. They will certainly not withdraw the detachments holding the Kumasi stockades and, of course, some means will have to be found to avert another Beckwai panic. I think on these lines lie our only hope of saving the Governor. His seven hundred troops can certainly force a selected stockade."

There was a pause.

"I am afraid, sir, I cannot see eye to eye with you," said Wilson. "The argument I mentioned applies equally to this case, in fact worse."

"Yes," I agreed, "but this plan offers a sporting chance. We know that Carter and Wilkinson with over six hundred troops are at Kwisa and that Dompuassi is held by the Adansis. If you went back to Esan Kwanta you would not only draw the Achimas and Kumasis to Kokofu, but possibly be able to get in touch with Carter, or as a last resource push through with your company to Kwisa and bring them all back with you."

"What about you at Esumeja?"

"I admit that. You said we would not hold out twenty-four hours. If we stick it forty-eight hours, you are back again and all will be saved."

Wilson's reply was prompt.

"This is a matter for you to decide. I should hate to desert you, but if you think it is my duty to do so I will certainly carry out your orders."

"My grateful thanks, Wilson; we will leave it at that, and I do hope Carter will turn up before a decision has to be taken."

Turning about at the limit of our stroll, Captain Wilson and I caught sight of an escort approaching up the main path from Beckwai. We recognized it as the one that had been sent to

Fumsu with the Governor's letter. The native N.C.O. handed me the receipt for it, signed by Captain Biss, who had received it at Fumsu on the 11th of June.

We at once set to work to get all the information we could out of the N.C.O. and his escort. We plied them with question after question, got all we could out of them, and then dismissed them. Continuing our stroll, Captain Wilson and I compared notes on what we had learned. We definitely identified, besides D Company, F Company 1st W.A.F.F. with Captain Melliss, Captain Biss, and two British N.C.O.s, E and B Company of the 2nd W.A.F.F., Lieutenant-Colonel Carter's contingent of 3rd W.A.F.F., and Major Cramer's contingent of G.C.C. All these, with the exception of B Company 2nd W.A.F.F., were at Fumsu and Kwisa, B Company and Colonel Willcocks with staff being still at Prahsu, to which place the Governor's letter had been despatched from Fumsu on June 11th. Fumsu, the escort stated, was bustling with excitement, getting up convoys of food and ammunition for Kumasi. F Company, which had arrived from Prahsu with a convoy of three hundred carriers, was held up by the swollen Fum for two days, having only succeeded in getting the stores across the river a little before the arrival of the escort on June 11th, and it was not till next morning that the escort saw F Company under Captain Mellis leave for Kwisa. The escort before leaving Fumsu for Esumeja heard that another large convoy was approaching Fumsu from Prahsu.

"Well, Wilson," I asked, "what do you make of it all now?"

"I think, sir," he replied, "we can safely draw very definite conclusions. Colonel Willcocks, as he stated in his letter, would, unless he received an urgent call, remain at Prahsu to await the arrival of the Sierra Leone carriers which he expected on the 13th of June. That was yesterday, so he is probably by now on his way to Fumsu. As for Lieutenant-Colonel Carter, he is definitely waiting for F Company which must have arrived at Kwisa yesterday, and may still have to wait for Colonel Willcocks himself with further reinforcements and the Sierra Leone carriers, so that the advance to Kumasi can be made in one large fighting column as was done in 1896,

especially as the escort report that everyone at Fumsu is saying the Adansis will put up a stiff fight."

"Yes," I agreed, "but that plan will be upset by the arrival of the Governor's letter at Fumsu on June 11th. Melliss and Biss will most certainly know its contents, and so will Lieutenant-Colonel Carter the moment F Company reaches Kwisa. The question is, will Lieutenant-Colonel Carter wait for Colonel Willcocks or advance immediately with the seven hundred men he will have at Kwisa?"

"Well, sir, the Governor gives his last day as June 11th, three days ago. If Lieutenant-Colonel Carter thinks he will not be too late, he will certainly turn up at Beckwai to-morrow. If Colonel Willcocks answers the call and comes to the rescue himself, he should be at Beckwai on June 16th and still in time to save Kumasi if our estimate of the Governor not breaking out before the 18th is correct."

"But Wilson," I objected, "can we afford to take the risk? If only those Achimas were out of the way I would not hesitate, so let us leave it like this: If we do not hear by to-morrow night that the Achimas are out of the way or troops at Kwisa definitely on their way to Beckwai, that we make our last effort to save the women and children on the lines I have already suggested to you, and that we put this plan into practice the day after to-morrow, June 16th."

June 15th; three days left. Dawn was ushered in at Esumeja by exchanging shots. The deep boom of a Dane gun contrasted vividly with the sharp crack of our carbines. There was quite a skirmish close to our water supply. It was much too far away from the village and if we had to adopt a passive defence, a storage of water must be made in the village itself. It was soon apparent, however, that no attack was intended. It was more in the nature of a reconnaissance by the enemy to test our alertness. Quietness soon prevailed. I sent for the native head of the Intelligence service.

"Have you everybody out on the watch and well forward towards Kumasi?"

"Yaas, sir."

"Have the Achimas left their war camp, north of Pekki, yet?"

"No, sir."

"Are you sure?"

"Yaas, sir; we have been watching very very carefully for that move."

I then told him to go at once to Beckwai, ask for an audience of the King, and tell him that the troops had been delayed. The Big White Colonel had got two thousand Sierra Leone carriers and they were delaying him; also to ask the King for the latest news from the Achima war camp. Off he went.

I made inquiries how our patient of the night before was. Dr. Barker reported temperature down, but advisable to keep him quiet to-day. The rest of us were on tenterhooks awaiting signs from either Kumasi or Kwisa.

The native head of the Intelligence Service was back again. He had seen the King, who was not pleased at the delay of the troops and warned me to be specially careful of Queen Ashantuah. The Achimas had not left their war camp; he promised most faithfully to let me know the moment they moved. He wanted me to know that some of the Adansis had moved to Akrokerri near Yakabu. That was why he moved some of his levies from Esan Kwanta there. Would I write again to the King of Denkera to send his men there, too.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Esumeja Answers Colonel Willcocks's Appeal

THE Adansis were frightening the life out of the King of Beckwai, so afraid was he that they would cut off his escape. It was plain he meant to go the moment he thought Queen Ashantuah was getting the better of us. Meantime he asked me to write again to the King of Denkera, and as it was vitally important to keep that monarch on our side, I decided to do so. This is what I wrote:

From the Officer Commanding Advanced Party Troops.
To the King of Denkera.

Esumeja,
June 16, 1900.

KING,

I have been expecting to hear from you in reply to my two letters of May 28th and 29th which the King of Beckwai forwarded with his own messenger.

I do not know if you have heard from Colonel Willcocks who is commanding all the troops now advancing and those that are yet to come, but in case you have not I must urge you to send your troops up to the border of the Beckwai country by Obuassi, Yakabu, and the Ofin River as quickly as you can, and be prepared to help the Beckwais against any invasion of their territory and to assist as Colonel Willcocks will request you.

I am informed that some Adansis are now going into your territory, and to prevent their doing any further mischief and collecting to attack any troops who may be coming up to Beckwai I request that you will detain them as prisoners, without hurting them, until

the trouble is over or until Colonel Willcocks tells you what to do with them.

I am sure that your loyalty to Her Majesty the Queen and desire to see peace soon restored will cause you to comply with what I am writing as soon as you possibly can.

I am, King, your good friend,

W. MONTAGU HALL,

Captain.

I had hardly signed my name when two envoys from the King of Beckwai were announced. I recognized them again, and asked what they wanted.

The interpreter one glanced round and almost whispered:

"The Achimas are trying to persuade the Beckwais at Pekki to make one with them and come on to attack you at Esumeja. The King wants you to know this. The messengers only just came in before we started; the King is very upset."

"This won't do. The King told me in a letter written by Mr. Jones five days ago that the Achimas were coming to attack me this week. Haven't they started?"

"No, sir; they want the Beckwais to join them."

"All right; you tell the King to send the messengers back to Pekki to tell the Beckwai men to tell the Achimas to go and fight the White Man at Esumeja first, and if they drive him away the Beckwais will make one with the Achimas, but if they try to come to make one before they do this the Beckwais will capture and punish their messengers. You quite understand?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, here is a letter I have written to the King of Denkera. I have left it open in the envelope. I want you to take it to the King of Beckwai, have it read to him and ask him to send it on to the King of Denkera as quickly as possible. You understand that?"

"Yes, sir."

"Now one more thing. I want some water-pots for storing water, and an extra supply of food for the market. Tell the King I must have them to-day. He is keeping a good supply for the troops coming up all right?"

"Yes, sir; good morning, sir."

Left to my own thoughts this latest news of the Achimas was very disappointing. I had been expecting them daily. It revived the thought that perhaps they would hang about and intercept the Governor after all. Could I wait any longer before putting the retrograde plan into practice. The 18th was the day after to-morrow.

My thoughts were interrupted by a letter being handed to me. I made a note of the time; it was 8.30 a.m., 16th June, and on opening the letter read:

Captain Hall or other Officer Commanding Beckwai or near it.

Camp Prahsu,
June 11, 1900.

SIR,

I send this by a runner thro' the Gold Mines. At present M. le Colonel Carter est a Quissa avec deux cent cinquante soldats sans compter les blessées. A Fumsu nous avons cinquante soldats et ici deux cent soldats, mais n'avons pas aucun de cannon. Il n'y a pas d'autres soldats dans la Colonie, cinquante hommes exceptés, qui gardent deux milles porteurs qui viennent de Cape Coast—J'attend l'arrivée de cinq cent soldats plus, mais ils ne peuvent pas arriver qu'apres longtemps. Dans ces circonstances il est bien necessaire que vous donnez d'assistance a M. Carter pour qu'il arrive à Beckwai —Je comprend que le Roi de Beckwai á deux milles soldats et recenement a pris la ville d'Abadon—Vous devriez aussi avoir assez d'ammunition pour accomplir cet objet d'assister Carter comme je croix que vous n'avez eu qu'un combat a Kokofu avec peu de pertes—N'oubliez pas que vous seul avez beaucoup de soldats et beaucoup de Munitions (food) et ici sur la route des communications nous n'avons que sufficient pour Kwissa et Fumsu et chaque courroi doit se battre en route enfin de porter les vivres (chop).

Il y a besoin de grands efforts si nous voulons sauvez notre prestige et les femmes et les enfants assiegées.

Notre difficulté la plus grande ici est la manque (lack) de porteurs et jusqu'a ce qu'ils arrivent ce qui ne se peut pas cinq jours, je demande que vous faites une grande effort pour tendre d'assistance á Carter pour qu'il arrive a Beckwai.

J. WILLCOCKS, Colonel,
Commanding Ashanti Field Force.

I went in search of Captain Wilson.

"Read this letter from Colonel Willcocks," I said. "He was still at Prahsu when he wrote it on June 11th. He is waiting there for five hundred more troops who cannot arrive for a considerable time, and he wants us to help Carter at Kwisa to get to Beckwai."

Captain Wilson studied the letter carefully, then looked up and exclaimed:

"Why, Carter has between five and six hundred men to force Dompuassi with. Colonel Willcocks does not seem to know that D Company is at Kwisa, too, and has also forgotten to mention that F Company was on its way there, for our own escort told us that they had seen that Company leave Fumsu for Kwisa on June 12th."

I agreed, but pointed out that there was the carrier difficulty to contend with and that Carter was no doubt waiting for me to carry out Colonel Willcocks's instructions.

"That may be so," Wilson agreed, "but as I told you two days ago, when we were discussing the very situation that has now arisen, Colonel Willcocks would have got your appeal at Prahsu the very next day, June 12th, and you may bet that he is not going to let the two hundred men at Prahsu sit down and do nothing. I think, therefore, we ought to count on Colonel Willcocks and Lieutenant-Colonel Carter arriving at Beckwai at any moment."

We worked out what Colonel Willcocks would have to do. He had only to start from Prahsu on the same day that he received my appeal, with the two hundred men he had there. He would have some two hundred carriers available who would be back again after taking the two hundred bags of rice to Fumsu on June 9th. He would leave the garrison at Fumsu intact, march direct on Beckwai via Obuassi as I had told him, instruct Lieutenant-Colonel Carter to co-operate in the forward movement, and be at Beckwai in time to save Kumasi. The converging march of these two columns on Beckwai, each passing close to Dompuassi, would ensure little opposition from the Adansis, but so far neither column had arrived and it was June 16th. The Achimas were still occupying their

war camp which guarded the western exit from Kumasi; so unless within the next forty-eight hours they could be decoyed away or the Ashanti Field Force reach Kumasi, the fate of the poor women and children was sealed. Every minute's delay was fatal. I decided to act. I told Captain Wilson that the time had come to carry out our retrograde plan. We could no longer gamble with the lives of those in Kumasi and the safest way was to pursue a positive course of action.

It was clear that Lieutenant-Colonel Carter was definitely located at Kwisa, but Colonel Willcocks's advance, although probable, was not absolutely certain, and Captain Wilson agreed with me that it was better to make certain of getting the six hundred men up from Kwisa than to wait on the chance of the eight hundred getting up.

"So you are going to take your chance at Esumeja and want me to make the retrograde movement to-day?" Wilson asked.

"Yes," I said, "if by noon there are no signs of their coming up. You warn your Company and I will see Dr. Barker about medical arrangements and hammocks and tell him to let you have Staff-Sergeant Payne to accompany you. You will take all the available carriers and Colour-Sergeant Humphries. On arrival at Esan Kwanta you must use your own discretion and try to get a message into Kwisa or let Carter know in some way of your presence at Esan Kwanta. Perhaps a reconnaissance on Dompuassi might attract their attention, but please do not become involved if the enemy is in strength, as you know we rely on your returning as soon as possible. You know exactly our position here and our intentions."

I told him that I had just heard that the Achimas were still in their war camp, and suggested that he might be ready to start after the midday meal. I said that I would send off a letter at once to Colonel Willcocks, who was most probably on his way to Beckwai via Fumsu, informing him of the move, and that I should also add the name of Lieutenant-Colonel Carter in case Colonel Willcocks should be delayed.

I then wrote as follows:

From Captain W. M. Hall, Commanding Advance Troops.
To the Officer Commanding Ashanti Field Force or Lieutenant-Colonel Carter.

Esumeja,
9.30 a.m., June 16th.

1. A letter has just been received from Officer Commanding Troops at Prahsu dated June 11th, also another letter from the same source dated June 8th arrived here at 5.30 p.m. on 13th inst.

2. You are evidently not aware that I despatched D Company 1st W.A.F.F. to the assistance of Kwisa on May 29th with 112 carriers.

3. I am this morning sending E Company 1st W.A.F.F. with all available carriers to Esan Kwanta, leaving the Officer Commanding that company with a free hand to act as he thinks best on his arriving at Esan Kwanta; and I have also informed him of the contents of your letter of June 11th.

4. The situation here is the same, no communications have been received from Kumasi since June 9th.

5. I am collecting all the available food at Beckwai and here.

W. MONTAGU HALL,
Captain.

We officers assembled to see E Company and the hundred and fifty carriers off. I addressed a few words to the soldiers I had raised and trained for nearly three years, and shook hands with Colour-Sergeant Humphries and Staff-Sergeant Payne. Then turning to Captain Wilson with a good handshake, I whispered, "Good luck. If we are done in here you can explain everything—that it seemed the only chance of saving the women and children in Kumasi."

They marched off silently. We looked at each other and moved away to our duties in silence, too. Was it to that tabloid of poison or that last round of ammunition that our thoughts were turned?

Every available man was now out in position. It was to be a continuous duty; the village presented a deserted appearance and one was thankful when darkness fell.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

What Will Happen Now?

At Esumeja my lonely vigil was broken next morning, June 17th, the last day but one to save Kumasi, by the exchange of shots. Was it coming? There was no one about. As daylight increased the shots died down; after all it was nothing more than our alertness being tested by the enemy.

Breakfast was a solitary affair, coming and going, broken by the query, "Any news?"

Starting on my morning tour of inspection I first visited the R.A.

The 75-mm. gun with its detachment were snugly housed in an outbuilding in a commanding position. Staff-Sergeant Griggs and Mr. Claude Dahne were standing outside by the theodolite discussing bearings. I had no news and asked for particulars of the exact amount of ammunition in hand and in reserve, which I entered in my notebook as follows: double common, 13; shrapnel, 39; star, 9. None to spare, I thought.

Moving on to the Kokofu path I approached Captain Haslewood, who was now in charge of the maxim gun detachment alongside that path and under shelter of the large cotton-tree.

"How do you like our ·303 maxim, Haslewood."

"A little beauty; far ahead of the ·450 the Gold Coast Constabulary has got. I brought it into action this morning, bagged an Ashanti in that opening there. I could have bagged the other two who were carrying him off. I let them go."

"Well done," I said. "A live man can talk and is more likely to frighten Queen Ashantuah. Where is Edwards?"

"Oh, stalking a party of Ashantis, lurking round our water supply. He has been longing to get them for some time."

"Well, I'll go and look up Anderson," I said. "I shall be back in the office if you want me."

Captain Anderson was found resting on a log, under shelter of some branches, reading as if at peace with the whole world. He was the most unconcerned person I ever met; nothing seemed to ruffle him. We called him "George." He was a comfort in a tight corner.

"You seem to be enjoying life," I began.

"Yes, it is my turn now; I have had enough of those Ashanti beggars for the last two hours."

"Well, old man, no news yet. I must be getting back; you will find me in the office if you want me."

Looking at my watch I saw that it was 9.15. What a terribly long morning! I entered the office and sat down. I felt tired. I could see the empty village before me, when my eye caught sight of a messenger. I beckoned to him. He handed me a package. It contained three letters.

I began reading the first. It was from Colonel Willcocks, dated Prahsu, June 10th, the day previous to his letter of June 11th which I had already received and acted upon.

The letter read as follows:

Camp Prahsu,
June 10, 1900.

Captain Hall or other British officer at Beckwai or its vicinity.

In continuation of my letter of June 8th I now write to say that owing to reports from Lieutenant-Colonel Carter at Kwisa in which he reports "de sixième juin pendant mon avance a Beckwai je recontrai l'ennemi dans de palisades et des entrenchements a Dompuassi. Après une action prolongée dans laquelle nous eprouvions quartre-vingt dix casualities l'ennemi quitta les entrenchements mais les grand nombre de mes blessés et la maigreté de mon ammunition me décida d'y retourner," etc. "J'avais sept casualties parmis mes douze officiers," etc. From this you will see that until the carriers reported from Cape Coast arrive here the Main Column is unable to advance as there is not a carrier here, all having been sent on to Fumsu with food of which Kwisa is practically deficient. As soon as carriers arrive sufficient to convey reserve ammunition, food, and medical appliances the advance will begin. I expect large

reinforcements of men too shortly with which to punish the rebels. Of course the relief of Kumasi is our main and primary object, and to achieve this every other consideration must be subordinated, but why is it I have no kind of news from there? Have you not heard from the Governor or any White Man or other besieged person? Please use every endeavour, by money or other means, to communicate and inform any officer on the line of communications of the state of affairs in Kumasi.

Please remember that you are now the nearest British representative, that you have a good market and supplies, that Beckwai is friendly, and that the British name is involved in this affair; failure to save Kumasi will mean lasting shame on the White Man in the eyes of the natives and if worst comes to worst you must in conjunction with Beckwai (to whom you may promise any reward on any authority) attempt even if not reinforced beforehand, and if the garrison calls on you to save the women and children, advance and make the attempt. Everything is being done here to move on and I expect in a very few days to have sufficient carriers to reinforce Lieutenant-Colonel Carter and force a way to Kumasi.

Please pay bearer well on delivery of this.

J. WILLCOCKS, Colonel,
Commanding A.F.F.*

Colonel Willcocks's wishes and intentions were quite clear. He realized that Carter was held up at Kwisa and meant that he was going to reinforce him and come along himself, but might be too late to relieve Kumasi, and that I was, if called upon, to sacrifice everything and make the attempt to save the women and children. Colonel Willcocks's letter of June 11th next day clearly altered his previous decision, which now was for me to wait and help Carter reach Beckwai and probably Willcocks and his reinforcements, too, so that a combined advance could be made in the next few days. Everything now was in order. Wilson had already been sent back

I took up the second letter. It was from Sub-Assistant Commissioner Burke at Obuassi, addressed to Officer Commanding Fumsu, evidently sent to me for my information. I glanced at it. It reported that twenty-two armed Europeans were going to desert to the Coast.

* The reader will remember this letter being sent off in Chapter XV.

This was disappointing news after the strong appeal I had made to the Europeans at Obuassi on my way up, and after having them supplied with forty rifles and plenty of ammunition.

I then took up the third letter which read:

Fumsu,
June 14, 1900.

To the Officer Commanding Troops in Beckwai.

SIR,

I have the honour to inform you that I evacuated Kwisa to-day and retired on Fumsu.

I hear on good information that the road from Esan Kwanta to Kwisa is well stockaded and could only be forced by a strong body of troops with plenty of ammunition.

The road from here to Kwisa is also stockaded.

I have the honour to be,

Good heavens! Kwisa evacuated! The Ashanti Field Force gone back!

I flew to Captain Haslewood, and told him to parade at the office an escort of three men with carbines only and 20 rounds each, from anywhere, with a native guide, ready to move in five minutes. I must stop Wilson at any cost.

I ran back and wrote:

From Captain W. M. Hall, Commanding Troops at Esumeja.
To Officer Commanding E Company 1st W.A.F.F.

Esumeja,
9.30 a.m., June 17, 1900.

1. Information has been received that Kwisa is evacuated, the troops having fallen back on Fumsu.

2. You are therefore not to advance on Kwisa but to return here with all despatch.

3. Heavy fighting has taken place near Dompuassi.

4. You should bring back with you all the blankets, stores, etc. left by D Company 1st W.A.F.F.

W. MONTAGU HALL, Captain,
Officer Commanding Esumeja.

The escort, native guide, and Captain Haslewood were already outside. I handed over the letter and carefully explained everything to the escort. They moved off at a trot.

I showed Haslewood the letters and waited for his comment.

After studying them he stood a moment looking thoughtfully at the envelope. Then he said:

"Mr. Burke reports that Colonel Willcocks's letter was opened in error at Obuassi. It was sent back to Fumsu and no wonder it took seven days getting here. Did you notice the P.S. on Officer Commanding Fumsu's letter which had been opened too? 'I have received orders from Colonel Willcocks dated June 15th that you are on no account to leave Beckwai in a retrograde direction. An officer and fifty men leave here to-day for Obuassi.' The envelope was marked by him 'runner left Fumsu 9.5 a.m., June 15th.' This means that Colonel Willcocks is at or near Fumsu, or that the telegraph wire has been replaced between Fumsu and Prahsu."

Bang! A Dane gun in the direction of Kokofu. Bang—pip—— Captain Haslewood put the papers down and ran to his maxim gun.

I went through the letters again. I read Colonel Willcocks's. It was obvious that the information contained in this letter would alarm the Europeans at Obuassi. Already twice they had been threatened with destruction. They now learned that Lieutenant-Colonel Carter had suffered a reverse. He had seven out of his twelve officers wounded and ninety men, and had to retire to Kwisa. This letter further told them that if Kumasi called upon me, which Obuassi already knew they had, I was to advance and make the attempt to save them. They knew well this must lead to the Ashanti army at Kokofu being set free and both the Beckwais and Adansis united as rebels. The climax must have come when they opened Officer Commanding Fumsu's letter. What had Mr. Burke to say about it? I read his letter more carefully.

From R. Burke, Assistant Commissioner.
To the Officer Commanding Fumsu.

Obuassi,
5 p.m., June 13th.

I beg to inform you that I am raising a levy of Beckwais to assist us in case of an attack.

2. The miners to the number of twenty-two are, I am afraid,

determined on leaving us; personally I consider they are a source of weakness to the place, eternally grumbling, inquiring about their safety, etc.; most of the carriers got frightened and ran away.

3. We now stand, excluding the miners: seventeen Europeans, seventeen police, and up to time of writing fourteen Beckwais. I think I can arm eight or nine Kroo-boys who after a bit of drill should, I think, be able to shoot fairly straight.

4. Please don't worry about the place being abandoned; we shall stick it to the last man. I also promise you we shall give the rebels a warm reception in case they attack us.

R. BURKE.

Well done, Burke; Rorke's Drift was not in it! But what a panic! There must have been a very large number of carriers in the mines of the Ashanti Goldfields. Mr. Burke after finishing his letter had evidently been nonplussed, owing to the panic—what to do with Colonel Willcocks's letter to me; so he had sent it back to Fumsu with his own letter. Officer Commanding Fumsu was in communication with Colonel Willcocks, so the only construction I could place on his sending me the three letters and the wording of Colonel Willcocks's last order was: (*a*) the original order of Colonel Willcocks to advance and make the attempt still held good. (*b*) I was to understand that the Ashanti Field Force had retired to Fumsu and no help was to be expected for some time. (*c*) That Obuassi was to be held by sending one officer and fifty men to strengthen the place.

I could fully appreciate Colonel Willcocks's order to advance. It would indeed be a disgrace if no attempt were made to save Kumasi, but Colonel Willcocks knew as well as I did that there was no question of Kumasi being captured by the rebels. He knew that it had a powerful fort and was garrisoned by seven hundred troops. It was a question of food—starvation or evacuation. Take food. First for Europeans. We had none available at Esumeja, neither was there any procurable at Beckwai. We still had ninety-two bags of rice, but how long would that last among a population of four thousand, even if we had the carriers to carry it in, which we had not? Colonel Willcocks had suggested bribing the Beckwais for fighting men,

carriers, and food. I could assure him it was not from want of trying that I had failed.

"Then for goodness sake evacuate Kumasi," I could almost imagine Colonel Willcocks saying. "That is why I want you to advance and make the attempt." Certainly it could be done. I could easily enter Kumasi, Queen Ashantuah had been trying to tempt me on for weeks. There were only about one thousand Ashantis at Karsi to make us blaze off our ammunition, so that we should have little to try and get out with. The question was, would the people in Kumasi ever get out, with the Ashanti army set free at Kokofu and the Beckwais, Adansis, and other tribes gone over? They would only have been strengthened in their task by the few men we had here, one hundred and thirty-six all told, including wounded and sick.

No, I was putting my own plan into operation, which was not to give Kumasi one hundred extra soldiers to come out with against the whole Ashanti nation for seventy-five miles, but to utilize these hundred soldiers not only to hold away the Ashanti army, but to ensure the exodus from Kumasi being made against the fewest possible rebels for a few miles, into country near at hand, which I had been able so far to keep friendly. There had been and was still a large force of Achimas guarding the proposed line of retreat from Kumasi. These Achimas had told the Beckwais at Pekki they were coming to Kokofu to attack Esumeja. They had not come. I had therefore deliberately made the hard-pressed soldiers at Esumeja a decoy to bring the Achimas along by sending back the Nupe Company for forty-eight hours, with carriers to help up Lieutenant-Colonel Carter from Kwisa. Lieutenant-Colonel Carter's troops had failed us, but I hoped to see E Company back soon.

I fully realized that my course of action would, in the words of Colonel Willcocks "mean lasting shame on the White Man," but it might save the lives of the women and children. I must shoulder the responsibility and might the "White Man" forgive me. To advance to Kumasi and save the honour of the White Man could only lead to the wholesale slaughter of the women and children, and their slaughter too if we failed in our task at Esumeja. What a responsibility!

Bang! another Dane gun rang out. I went out to inquire and met Lieutenant Edwards.

"What is all this firing about so late in the day?"

"Well, sir, the Ashantis are becoming most inquisitive; I have been chivvying them through the dense undergrowth in all directions. I don't like the look of things. The sooner Wilson gets back the better; another day like this will be as much as my men can stick."

"All right," I said, "carry on. Try and keep the Ashantis on the move; we have not many rounds left for the 75-mm. gun."

Moving on I stopped as I saw two messengers approaching. I recognized them as those from the King of Beckwai.

Now I'm in for it, I thought. I was saluted. The interpreter messenger said that the King wished to see me at Beckwai at once.

"Impossible, I can't leave Esumeja to-day."

"Well, sir, the King is going to flee. We want him to have one more talk with you before all is lost."

"Tell the King I will meet him and his chiefs half-way to Beckwai in two and a half hours' time, that is 1 p.m. You understand? Mind, see they turn up. Tell the King there is nothing to fear."

I noticed both the messengers were glancing round the village, as if struck by its emptiness; so I continued:

"The soldiers are out watching Queen Ashantuah, and one Company, with the carriers has gone to Esan Kwanta to fetch back the blankets and kit there, now that your Beckwai levies have left for Yakabu."

The messengers seemed reassured and departed.

Captain Haslewood was back at the office reading the letters. He looked tired and ill.

"This is pretty bad," he said. "I'm afraid our sacrifice will be in vain."

"Oh! I'd hardly say that," I said. "Willcocks knows by now our difficult position; he may even be near Beckwai. In any case our letters we sent off early yesterday morning about D and E Companies going back will be telegraphed from Fumsu if he is not already there, to Prahsu. One could

almost guess what his telegraphic reply to Officer Commanding Fumsu would be: 'Advance to Beckwai immediately; England expects every man to do his duty.' Well, old man, I have an appointment with the King of Beckwai at 1 p.m. You cannot leave your maxim gun, and there are no men available for an escort, so would you let me have a couple of carbines with 20 rounds. I am taking the native head of the Intelligence Service, my own orderly, and my native servant as my escort. I shan't be long; tell Anderson to carry on."

I was about to start off with my improvised escort when I was handed a report from Captain Wilson which had just come in. It ran:—

To Captain Hall, Commanding Troops Esumeja.
From Captain Wilson, Officer Commanding E Company 1st *W.A.F.F.*

Esan Kwanta,
6 a.m., June 17, 1900.

As I can hear no news of Kwisa and have failed to get a message through, I am going on there this morning. The Adansis and Abadom men are on the road but I do not think in any large numbers.

Lieutenant Beamish had two fights on the road between here and Kwisa, one Dompuassi and one Fomena.

Nor do I understand from the King here that he had any heavy loss or was delayed long.

M. WILSON, Captain,
1st W.A.F.F.

I thought for a moment. Wilson would give the Adansis a good smashing. It would be a great surprise to him when his patrol came back with the report that Kwisa was evacuated. He would be at a loss as to whether to wait at Dompuassi and report, or return instantly to Esumeja. He would soon get my letter and be back again. I felt sure, since he knew that he would have to get back again, that Wilson would hold Dompuassi with some of his command, while he continued on towards Kwisa. He knew the bad reputation of Dompuassi and that he with Lieutenant-Colonel Carter would be returning there. On our northward march from Kwisa in May, Captain Wilson knew that we had held Dompuassi until the various units of my command had passed through on consecutive days. I therefore felt reassured and moved on towards Beckwai.

CHAPTER TWENTY

Dandegusu Saves a Crisis

THE escort and I reached the appointed place, in single file, all eyes and ears, but not a sign of the King of Beckwai. We halted. I posted the orderly as sentry in the dense bush about twenty yards on the Kokofu side of the path, and sat down on a large cotton-tree root to await events. I amused myself trying to divert an army of ants, moving in a bee-line twenty to thirty abreast; it could not be done. I gave up the attempt and called the native Head to my side.

"What do you think has happened?" I asked.

"I don't like to say too much, sir," he replied; "an old man in one of the Beckwai villages I visited last night told me that something was going to happen soon, the young men were talking big; no other word would he say. His words have come back to me, sir; it must be the King of Beckwai is going to flee and won't be here to-day."

"Fall in, call the sentry, march."

We reached the battlefield of Amoaful in quick time, then branched west towards Beckwai. We saw a native running towards us. The King was coming, he said, would we wait.

After a wait of nearly ten minutes, the King, his retinue, and a few chiefs arrived and took their seats on small stools carried by the party. The King appeared to have been drinking and the interpreter apologized by saying that the King wasn't very well. Formal business then began.

I asked what the King wished to see me about. He seemed surprised.

"Your men are running away again and the Achimas have

left their war camp north-east of Pekki to attack you at Esumeja. You must run away, too, and I go first!"

"King," I asked, "have the Achimas actually started?"

The King nodded. My heart gave a violent jump and I felt quite boisterous. I went up and patted the King violently on the shoulder, exclaiming: "Splendid, splendid!"

The King jumped up in an excited state and talked so rapidly to the interpreter that the poor man had to pause for a considerable time before he could collect all that the King told him to tell me. The interpreter began:

"The King knows that all the soldiers at Kwisa have run away. The King knows that the White men at Obuassi have run away. The King knows that the Big White Colonel will not move from Prahsu. The King knows that the soldiers will not come back till after the rains, in October."

"Nonsense," I exclaimed.

The King became even more excited and the interpreter took quite an appreciable time in explaining that the King was very angry, because he knew he was right, that his own spies had actually heard some White officers saying that it was hopeless to do anything more till the rains were over, when they would have to start afresh with strong reinforcements and plenty of ammunition and carriers.

I was rather taken aback by this, so thought to pursue a new line.

"Tell the King I am not going to run away from Esumeja, and if I don't run away, the two companies belonging to me, which went back, will return to protect their Captain, who has looked after them for nearly three years. If the King does not believe this I will tell him what these two companies have already done in fighting."

The answer came: "Speak on."

I began: "The King knows that three weeks ago the King of Adansi collected his army at Dompuassi. The intentions of the Adansis were to kill the Europeans of the Ashanti Goldfields, capture Kwisa, and prevent the advance of the Big White Colonel. The King of Beckwai knows that he could not help me with his army, neither could he answer the appeal for

help of the Ashanti Goldfields. It had to be done from Esumeja, and one Company was sent back to attack the Adansi army. It defeated it at Dompuassi, the Ashanti Goldfields were saved, and the garrison at Kwisa strengthened.

"Heavy rains and swollen rivers have delayed the Big White Colonel with his many soldiers. They are now coming straight to Beckwai, via Fumsu and Obuassi, and the soldiers who were at Kwisa are coming that way, too. The King knows that Kumasi is short of food. The Big White Colonel is only waiting for the two thousand Sierra Leone carriers with food and ammunition; yes, two thousand, all fighting men, too! They are nearing Prahsu, and some white men at Obuassi have gone to hurry them on. The King may know that plenty of soldiers have already arrived at Obuassi [to myself: 'one officer and fifty men'], and that there are many soldiers at Fumsu and Prahsu."

I paused. The King and chiefs nodded assent.

"Good," I said. "Now the King can see that there will be plenty of soldiers in Beckwai to-morrow or next day.

"The King knows, too, that the Adansi army is again at Dompaussi; therefore yesterday another Company was sent back from Esumeja to Esan Kwanta, there to be ready to attack the Adansi army should it attempt to interfere with the Big White Colonel's soldiers coming up to Beckwai. This Company are the veterans of a great battle a year ago, so the King and his chiefs need have no fear of soldiers not arriving at Beckwai very, very soon."

The King then interrupted.

"Queen Ashantuah will be too quick and destroy you at Esumeja; to-morrow, perhaps to-day!"

"No, the King told me that very danger over three weeks ago. We have not run away from Esumeja yet."

Then turning to the chiefs I appealed to them to await the result at Esumeja.

"You know that for nearly one month my soldiers have protected you and your people from the rebels. We mean to protect you to the bitter end. The Big White Colonel may order me to be shot for doing this and not going on to Kumasi. I appeal for your gratitude by remaining loyal. You have every-

thing to gain and nothing to lose. It is only a matter of one or two days now. Don't risk losing the rewards that will come to you. The Great White Queen has a strong arm. The British Army is winning in South Africa and many soldiers coming here."

My appeal seemed to fall on deaf ears. There was complete silence. Something had to be done, so I spoke again.

"You, King and chiefs, are frightened because Queen Ashantuah's army at Kokofu is so large and we at Esumeja so small."

The King and Chiefs nodded. I saw it was a difficult thing to explain away. Fortunately I had as an example my own engagement against Dandegusu in Northern Nigeria, and carried out by E Company. Turning to the King and chiefs I began again:

"We at Esumeja are more numerous than the company who went back yesterday to Esan Kwanta. Let me tell you what that company did a little over a year ago. You know, King, that a new force was raised in Northern Nigeria, which comprises the Fulani Empire, and which, like your country, has many kings and chiefs. One king, the King of Dandegusu, like Queen Ashantuah, defied the White Captain and said he would destroy him and his soldiers if they dared come to fight him. They did fight him; the White Captain was myself and the soldiers were the company that went back to Esan Kwanta.

"You in Beckwai know only big trees and thick jungle. In the Fulani Empire the country is open and undulating, with hills and valleys. The company marched for many days and arrived near Dandegusu, which was on the way to Sokoto, the capital of the Fulani Empire.

"Now what did the King of Dandegusu do? He saw us coming and sent his horsemen, in white flowing robes and turbans, carrying long spears or swords, and protected by circular shields, four feet across, on to the open plain to charge and kill us. We made ourselves into the shape of a square, hit them hard with our bullets, and moved on towards Dandegusu. The King, seeing us coming on sent all his foot soldiers to lie in wait for us in the long grass and cultivation. We saw them and stopped. Each waited for the other. It was like Queen Ashantuah making ready to attack Esumeja. The

King did so, and with drums beating they came on; we hit them back hard. They fell back to Dandegusu. We followed them. They made one more fight in their town, like Queen Ashantuah would have done at Kokofu, then they all ran away. We had defeated an army as big as Queen Ashantuah's army with that one company.

"Now, Interpreter, be very careful and accurate in explaining what I have to say. King and Chiefs, you know that I have with me at Esumeja at this very moment, not one company and one maxim as at Dandegusu, but two companies, one big gun, and two maxims [to myself '130 men all told']. Please let everybody know, the Beckwais, the rebels, and even Queen Ashantuah, what the White Captain did at Dandegusu. He is going to do it again with Queen Ashantuah, perhaps to-morrow, perhaps next day. She will have to run away from Kokofu like the King of Dandegusu. Tell her, better pack up and run away now, or surrender before it is too late."

There was much animation at this last remark. The King exclaimed: "Never, Queen Ashantuah! She would die rather than run away."

"Splendid," I retorted, " I admire brave women. Tell her so."

The chiefs smiled. We were on friendly terms once more. I left the issue at that and the meeting then broke up.

Would Dandegusu do the trick? This engagement in reality was a much more serious affair than I had made out to the King of Beckwai. As a matter of fact, had it not been for the confusion caused by the carrying off from the field of the King of Dandegusu, severely wounded, and our seizing the occasion for a counter-attack, the operation might have ended in a tragedy. Not only did the enemy put up a stubborn resistance, but their strength was found to be out of all proportion to what we had been led to believe. The whole operation was a daring one, Dandegusu being eighty-two miles away from Yelwa, our starting-point on the River Niger, and on the road to Sokoto, the capital of the Fulani Empire, which extends from the River Niger to Lake Chad, comprises an area of some 35,000 square miles, and is inhabited by a warlike

Mahomedan race never hitherto conquered. Its commercial capital is Kano, north-east of Yelwa. This empire possessed considerable fighting forces, a large proportion being horsemen, and so successful had they been in preventing the intrusion of the foreigner that very little was actually known about their country.

In 1898, after an exciting period between the French and the newly raised West African Frontier Force, directed by Brigadier-General F. Lugard,* an Anglo-French convention was signed in Paris on June 14th, giving us control of Borgu, on the right bank of the River Niger and as far north as Illo, the left bank of that river forming the western boundary of the Fulani Empire. Borgu was taken over and occupied by us, but no attempt was made to interfere with the Fulani Empire as the military forces then available were considered quite inadequate to bring the Empire under our control.

Towards the end of that year I proceeded with my Nupe company from Borgu to the left bank of the River Niger and occupied Yelwa, between Boussa and Illo, and in addition to my military duties carried on political work there. I had succeeded in establishing friendly relations with the King of Yelwa, and by peaceful penetration with the Emir of Kalé, further eastward. The Fulanis, fearing further penetration and determined to oppose British rule, brought pressure to bear on the Emir of Kalé, the prime mover being the King of Dandegusu. This was to be the first trial of strength between the British and the Fulani Empire, for if we failed to support the Emir of Kalé, good-bye to our ever hoping to gain Northern Nigeria. I therefore prepared a bold stroke to deal with the King of Dandegusu and submitted it to the Officer Commanding Borgu. I received the following reply:

Yangbassa,
30 miles west of Boussa,
February 27, 1899.

SIR,

I have received your letters dated 17th and 23rd instant respectively *re* Dandegusu and Kalé palaver. The orders are that at present

* Lord Lugard, P.C., G.C.M.G., C.B., D.S.O.

we should mix ourselves up as little as possible with the affairs of the native rulers on the left bank. Under the circumstances you mention, however, it would appear that Dandegusu is decidedly bent on forcing our hand and therefore I sanction you going to the assistance of Kalé on certain conditions.

1. That you are quite certain that by doing so you will not be liable to be cut off from Yelwa by Kontegora or other aggressive chiefs who are only waiting for an opportunity to enter Yelwa itself.

2. That your object being to reinstate the chief of Kalé, you move as rapidly and with as few carriers as absolutely necessary and in such formation that you cannot be harassed by horsemen who, as you know, are quite useless against you so long as you do not get split up.

3. That having obtained your object you return at once to Yelwa making no attempt to follow Dandegusu.

In sanctioning this move I am assuming that you are quite certain that your information as regards the fighting force of Dandegusu and his allies is correct.

As Lieutenant Andrews and C Company 1st W.A.F.F. are proceeding to Illo and relieve Captain Eden and C Company 2nd W.A.F.F., you will probably be able to communicate with one of them on receipt of this in which you have my authority to apply to them for a reinforcement if you consider necessary of say fifty men. At least twenty men and a European should be left at Yelwa during your absence. I shall myself proceed to Yelwa immediately I arrive at Boussa; in the meantime I am sending a reliable native N.C.O. and twenty men by canoe to Yelwa to await my arrival at that place, under your orders. I should arrive at Yelwa eight days from this. If you consider it necessary you can apply for the M.O. at Illo to proceed to Yelwa until matters are settled.

I have the honour to be, Sir,
Your obedient servant,
ARTHUR FESTING, Major,
Officer Commanding Borgu.

With 120 rounds in their pouches and 100 rounds in reserve, the Nupe Company moved off for the great unknown.

Lieutenant W. H. Joiner was in charge of the maxim gun and Colour-Sergeant C. Lea, Worcestershire Regiment, in command of the advance guard. For three days we marched, ever watchful and in a country every hour getting more

beautiful, when we debouched on to a plain, the distant view of which was most enchanting. The sun had risen over the distant hilltops, throwing us out in bold relief in golden colours, while deep shadows still remained on the slopes of the hills, broken only by one shaft of gold illuminating a deep valley running right through the centre of the range of hills. We were then about five miles distant, and as horsemen had already begun to make their appearance, square was formed and the advance continued in that formation. The plain soon presented an animated appearance, with horsemen in white flowing robes and turbans moving about amongst the scattered trees, seeking an opportunity of harassing us. This necessitated constant halts to remind them of their boldness by spraying them with maxim gun fire. As soon as the maxim gun was dismounted and the square moved forward, in came these horsemen. The manœuvre had again to be repeated and strict discipline maintained so as not to let the men open fire too. The targets were so tempting, but I wished to conserve our ammunition, and had given strict orders that no carbine fire was to be opened unless the horsemen were within five hundred yards, and this order was strictly adhered to.

We were now only a mile from Dandegusu. We had halted still in square formation. We were in full view of the deep valley winding up through the range of hills. On the high ground above the entrance to the valley and on the right side of it could be seen the large, walled-in town of Dandegusu, while on the high ground on the opposite side of the valley was a large village with smaller ones stretching away in the distance. With field-glasses I could clearly see men moving down from the town and villages on both sides of the valley, to occupy the low foothills, while horsemen were seen moving down the valley itself and debouching on to the plain. The horsemen seemed a never-ending stream. For fully an hour we watched this movement, the whole plain in front of us becoming dotted with white-robed horsemen, covering Dandegusu and stretching away to our right and left as far as the eye could reach.

I was considerably taken aback by this great display of force

which was out of all proportion to what I had been led to believe at Yelwa. The words of Major Festing came back to me: "In sanctioning this move I am assuming that you are quite certain that your information as regards the fighting force of Dandegusu and his allies is correct." It was not correct; far from it; but here was I and the Nupe company in the face of them eighty-two miles from any help, and in a country never penetrated by an armed force before. Draw off? Certainly not! Make a bold front and await the enemies attack. We did. For a whole hour we stood facing each other.

A line of horsemen was seen to be advancing towards us. There was a momentary stir among our men as the white-robed horsemen, silhouetted against the green of the low foothills, were seen to be advancing with drums beating. When about a thousand yards distant the maxim gun opened fire, pouring in six hundred shots a minute, emptying many saddles and scattering the line to both flanks. It was then seen that a second body of horsemen was advancing rapidly, and as the effort of the maxim failed to stop them, the front face of the square was ordered to fire sectional volleys, and yet in spite of this murderous fire many horsemen succeeded in working round to the rear face of the square, which had to open fire and disperse them.

It was with a sigh of relief that I saw that this second attack had been repulsed, yet it was apparent that the enemy had by no means exhausted its effort, for within a quarter of an hour another line of white-robed horsemen, this time many deep, was seen advancing. It was a magnificent sight, and enough to unnerve the stoutest heart, let alone our newly raised, untried soldiers, for with many standards and a continuous roll of drums this stirring array of horsemen broke into a gallop. We met them with a withering fire, all four sides of the square became engaged, when suddenly the maxim gun jammed. Frantic efforts were made to get it going again, but without success.

An ugly moment had come. Would the square hold firm? Individual firing had already started when it was seen that a number of horsemen had dismounted and were rushing to carry off a wounded horseman towards Dandegusu. He was

obviously someone of importance, for there was an immediate lull and horsemen were seen turning about and retiring. This was our opportunity. The "Cease fire" was sounded, the square formed into line, bayonets fixed, and with the bugles sounding the "Advance" the line moved forward. Its effect was cheering. The horsemen were seen moving towards the entrance to the valley and retiring rapidly up it. Our advance continued, when it was seen that the men occupying the foothills, after some firing, were withdrawing up the hills to Dandegusu and the villages.

The line advancing steadily reached the foothills and, being without the help of the jammed maxim gun, a preliminary bombardment of Dandegusu with long-range carbine volleys was carried out, then the ascent of the hill commenced, and not withstanding a determined defence, a most gallant charge of our men secured possession of Dandegusu.

Darkness was falling. It had taken us since dawn to cover the five miles and capture Dandegusu, which, in the subjugation of Northern Nigeria, played a not dissimilar part to that of Omdurman in the conquest of the Sudan, as far as its moral effect on the Fulani Empire was concerned.

The rest of the story can best be told in the words of the official despatch:

"The enemy retreated to a strong position overlooking Dandegusu, but owing to our exhausted state and darkness coming on, we were unable to follow them up, and occupied for the night one of the villages on high ground about eleven hundred yards from that occupied by the enemy.

"Being told that the enemy would make a final stand in their new position in the morning, and that an attack on it with our small force, would entail much loss, we got the maxim into working order again, and just before dark had it sighted and fixed on the village, and at about 10 p.m. we fired it for a short time, with the result as anticipated that the village was unoccupied the following morning, and burnt by us.

"The whole of March 8th was spent in burning and destroying the villages of Dandegusu, and in reinstating the King of Kalé. No further opposition was met with of any importance.

"The headmen of two small neighbouring villages came in and made their submission, and stated that the enemy had retreated into Kontagora country, and when further questioned stated that they knew of our coming but were confident of destroying us.

"The power of Dandegusu has been utterly broken, eight villages and most of his grain being destroyed. Fifteen head of cattle, five ponies, and four hundred head of sheep were captured, and the King of Dandegusu himself severely wounded in the arm and his horse shot under him.

"I cannot speak too highly of the excellent behaviour of the troops under my command, under very trying circumstances, their fire discipline was excellent, their steadiness was most marked, and throughout I observed a complete absence of excitement, and, at the critical period when the maxim jammed their forming into line and advancing could not have been surpassed on the parade ground.

"It is worthy of record the excellent manner in which the troops marched, covering on an average twenty miles a day without a single case of sickness or of a man falling out. The total distance covered during the expedition being 164 miles."

We had captured Dandegusu, but there still remained the risk of an attack from Kontagora on our return march, especially as it was known that the defeated enemy and the King of Dandegusu himself had withdrawn there. A mounted messenger was despatched to Yelwa, informing Major Festing of the situation and to be prepared to move to our assistance in case of an attack on us from Kontagora. The return march, however, was successfully accomplished and we found Major Festing with strong reinforcements awaiting our arrival.

Thus ended the first engagement of the British army against the Fulani Empire, and, as it was proved later, it had brought about far-reaching results and contributed in no small measure to the final subjugation of that empire, now called Northern Nigeria. Yet not a word of the victory of Dandegusu ever reached the British public. It was then a hush-hush policy for our colonial expansion when many nations were scrambling

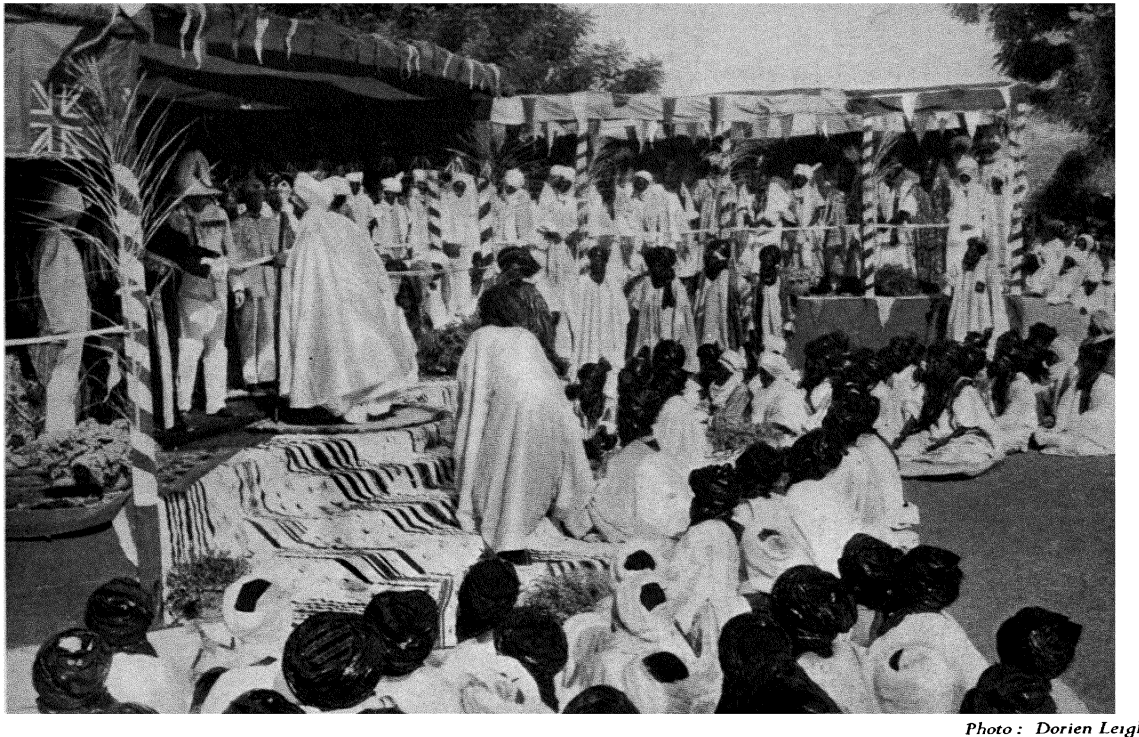


Photo : Dorien Leigh, Ltd.

Fulani Empire, 1939

Installation of Abubekr as the seventieth Sultan of Sokoto by Sir Bernard Bourdillon, Governor of Nigeria

for Africa and when the Boers were on the point of challenging our supremacy in South Africa.

Some further light on Dandegusu is thrown by the following letter.

From Colonel J. Willcocks, C.M.G., D.S.O., Officiating Commissioner and Commandant, W.A.F.F.
To the Secretary of State for the Colonies, London.

Jebba, Nigeria,
March 23, 1899.

SIR,

I have the honour to forward herewith copies of a report by Captain Hall, 1st Battalion, and extract from a covering letter from Officer Commanding Eastern Borgu regarding the recent small punitive expedition sent from Yelwa to punish the King of Dandegusu, and which I briefly reported to you by cablegram.

This chief had raided and deposed the Chief of Kalé, who was friendly to us and furnished us with supplies, cattle, etc., at Yelwa; he had latterly taken up a position between Kalé and Yelwa and stopped our supplies; the Kalé Chief asked us for help, which was given him, with the result that he is now in possession of his own and our supplies are once more regular. The Dandegusu king himself was severely wounded.

The King of Kontagora had, I am credibly informed, meant to assist Dandegusu should we have met with any reverse, but he has been disappointed; I trust Kontagora will be dealt with next dry season, as this chief very badly needs a severe lesson.

2. I am particularly pleased at the manner in which Captain Hall's company worked, as this company is composed entirely of Nupes, the only one in the territories; there were many who doubted the Nupe's ability to become a soldier, but Captain Hall has throughout maintained that they were as good as any others and only needed training and the opportunity; they have now had plenty of the first and a fair opportunity and Major Festing's remark on their return to Yelwa speaks for itself, specially as this officer has seen more West African bush fighting than any officer in the force.

The distance from the river and the fact that the Nupes were by themselves and had no Hausas to assist them was a very fair test of their quality as soldiers, and I recommend after this example that a company of Nupes be added to the 2nd Battalion, thus making a Nupe company in each battalion and enable us to rapidly recruit;

especially as it will be a very long time before sufficient Hausas are forthcoming. Should this meet with your approval I request the favour of a telegram being sent authorizing the raising of a Nupe company for the 2nd Battalion, so that they may become fairly trained before next year's operations.

3. I am fast coming to the conclusion that most of these West Africans will make good soldiers if well trained by white men.

(*Signed*) J. WILLCOCKS.

Next year's operations! These came, indeed, to the victors of Dandegusu. The Nupe company, in a last effort, was about to face an ordeal against the Adansis, considered impossible for the very much larger force which had already turned their backs on the Adansis, while on my shoulders must now rest the salvation of Kumasi. Would the spirit of Dandegusu win through a second time?

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

Horns of a Dilemma

THE King of Beckwai and I shook hands in silence and parted; I with my little escort back to Esumeja and he with his chiefs to Beckwai.

My meeting with the King had revealed two facts. The first was that, although we were holding the Ashanti army at Kokofu and had got the Achimas out of the way for the retirement of the Governor to the west, an intensified attempt to destroy us at Esumeja was about to be made. The second fact was that unless some portion of the Ashanti Field Force arrived at Beckwai within the next day or two, the King of Beckwai would flee and the powerful Beckwai tribe would at once join hands with Queen Ashantuah, which would mean the western exit from Kumasi barred and the certain annihilation of the exodus from Kumasi.

Left to my own thoughts I reviewed the chances of the Ashanti Field Force arriving at Beckwai in the next day or two. What was the information I had to work upon? The letters from the rear and the report of the escort I had sent back on June 9th with the Governor's appeal, which the escort handed over at Fumsu, starting back next morning, June 12th.

I could not and would not believe the King of Beckwai's statement that the Ashanti Field Force had given up the attempt, but it certainly looked as if the Kwisa lot had done so. There was quite a large force there, Lieutenant-Colonel Carter's own 3rd W.A.F.F., the Gold Coast Constabulary, Captain Beamish's Company 1st W.A.F.F., Lieutenant O'Malley's Company 2nd W.A.F.F., and Captain Melliss's

Company 1st W.A.F.F. There must have been seven hundred men, two guns, and three maxims at Kwisa when the decision to retire was taken. The official reason for doing so, as communicated to me in a letter, was that the advance could only be forced by a strong body of troops with plenty of ammunition, but I could not help thinking that the principal reason was knowing the date the Governor would break out of Kumasi had already passed by no less than three days, nothing more could be done, but the Kwisa force must now look to its own safety; it would be their turn next to be besieged and they had better clear out at once with their wounded before it was too late.

The last paragraph of the official letter sent to me on the retirement, stating that the road between Fumsu and Kwisa was stockaded, also seemed to confirm my view. But what would Colonel Willcocks say to this retirement, even if he, too, agreed that the time had now passed to do anything more for the Governor? Surely he would not stand looking on and do nothing; yet he sent me a message on the morning of June 15th, the day after the retirement, by Officer Commanding Fumsu, which that officer addressed to me in the following words: "I have received orders from Colonel Willcocks dated June 15th that you are on no account to leave Beckwai in a retrograde direction." I saw at once that this order, sent on the notification of the retirement from Kwisa, could have nothing to do with Colonel Willcocks's previous request that I should render all assistance to Colonel Carter at Kwisa to reach Beckwai, but that it was a fear on the part of Colonel Willcocks that we at Esumeja would follow the example of Kwisa and retire too. Not a word in his order about any fresh advance, only that one officer and fifty men were being sent to Obuassi, obviously to protect the Europeans still left there. He knew only too well that if we did retire from Esumeja all would be lost. Things certainly looked black, and no wonder the King of Beckwai was nervous.

At the bottom of my heart, however, I felt that Colonel Willcocks, knowing the critical position in which I was now

placed, would make a supreme effort, but the question was how was it to be carried through. The route via Fumsu, Kwisa, and Dompuassi was out of the question. It would mean forcing the Moinsi hills and all the stockades again. He would have to fall back on the alternative route, a longer one, which I had suggested to him in my letter of June 9th, via Fumsu, Obuassi, and Akrokerri, but what better chance of success did this offer? Akrokerri was in Adansi country, a little over three miles from Dompuassi with a good connecting road between them, and it would be equally easy for the Adansis at Dompuassi to stockade and bar the advance of the Ashanti Field Force at Akrokerri, as it was at Dompuassi; in fact, this alternative route being tortuous and difficult offered even better opportunities for a successful Adansi resistance.

The terrible thought then flashed on my mind that when the Ashanti Field Force, marching forward, received reports, as they assuredly would, that the road to Akrokerri was stockaded and strongly held, and could only be forced by a large force with plenty of ammunition, a similar decision to retire might again be taken, or perhaps another June 6th over again when, owing to the number of the wounded and the shortage of ammunition, the force was compelled to retire. No, the risk must not be taken; it was our only hope. I must do the only thing possible. I must order Captain Wilson with E Company to engage the Adansis at Dompuassi to cover the flank march of the Ashanti Field Force.

All the way back to Esumeja I was taunted by what seemed like two conflicting appeals. The first, from the Governor, might be imagined as: "You must save us; we must break out to-morrow; don't part with a single soldier; never mind the Ashanti Field Force, for goodness sake hold and keep Queen Ashantuah away from us." The other appeal, from Colonel Willcocks, I put thus to myself: "Never mind the Governor; he has seven hundred soldiers and three hundred levies to help him get out; for goodness sake help us to get to Beckwai. You know perfectly well that if we do not arrive in a day or two the Beckwais will go over and all is lost."

Entering the Rest House at Esumeja, I found Captain

Haslewood sitting in solitude. He rose with a tired and worried expression.

"I was getting anxious about you," he said, "the situation here is looking bad. All indications point to an attack on us. The spies report the arrival of the Achimas at Kokofu. Anderson and Edwards are out making all sorts of invisible defensive devices. How did you get on, sir?"

I told him that the brightest spot on the horizon seemed to be that we had succeeded in drawing the Achimas away and there was nothing now except a single line of stockades to prevent everyone in Kumasi from breaking out through the Achima and friendly Denkera country to the Coast, if only they would do it. They should break out to-morrow or next day as that would be over a week after the last day they wrote and told us they could possibly hold out for. They had seven hundred soldiers and three hundred levies with twenty British officers to tackle the selected single stockade. It was up to us to keep Queen Ashantuah's army at Kokofu, and if necessary sacrifice ourselves to the last man when the attack came. "We may be taunted for not going into Kumasi," I said, "but we on the spot know that we are doing the only thing possible to save the women and children."

Haslewood agreed, but wished that Wilson would hurry back and give us a more sporting chance than was represented by the present odds of one hundred and thirty-six to twenty thousand.

Then I told him that on account of the critical situation in our rear, I must now keep Wilson at Dompuassi. I explained that the situation had so developed that the success or failure of the whole campaign now depended on team work of the three separate commands fighting for their existence, namely those in Kumasi to get out into safety, those of Colonel Willcocks to reach Beckwai, those of ourselves to hold Queen Ashantuah and keep the Beckwais loyal. Kumasi could not get out unaided; Colonel Willcocks could not get to Beckwai unaided. It rested with us to help them both, and the course we had adopted was the only possible way of doing this, even though we might be wiped out at Esumeja while Kumasi was

in the act of breaking out. Wilson, by covering Colonel Willcocks's advance to Beckwai and sacrificing himself, too, if necessary, should still enable Colonel Willcocks's command to advance to renew the attack on Kokofu and be in time to keep the passage clear for the Governor, with the women and children, to escape to the Coast.

"Have an escort ready to leave to-morrow morning with the necessary orders to Wilson," I concluded, "and, by the way," I added, "I wonder how the two messengers we sent off to Kumasi on June 11th have got on. I have pinned my faith on the Governor's messenger; he was a most intelligent fellow and I feel I can rely on him by hook or crook to explain to those in Kumasi the very situation that has now arisen and the means of escape now open to them."

June 18th; *the* day. An hour before dawn found everyone in their allotted places, ready for the first boom of the enemy's Dane gun, which must sooner or later come. There was an air of grim determination in the look of the men. Everybody felt that they were being called upon to make the effort of their lives. As daylight broke the faces of the Europeans coming and going bore evidence of their own anxiety and the mental strain they were going through. They had left no stone unturned to maintain the active defence so essential for the dual work of defence and attack.

The native head was standing surrounded by a group of Esumeja men. These villagers had been won over to our cause, and under the guise of their peaceful pursuits they were rendering most valuable help in scouting in advance of our patrols and spying on the enemy's movements. They were unarmed and had no distinguishing badge, but were all instantly recognizable by the garrison. The native head was explaining to them the day's work: "Well forward towards Kumasi, to watch and report any signs from Kumasi or any movements from Kokofu." The villagers were moving off. Captain Haslewood at his maxim gun spotted me and came over.

"Well, sir, which is it to be, the attack on us or we to attack Kokofu?"

"I hope neither," I said; "let us hope Queen Ashantuah is waiting for us; but where is that escort for Dompuassi?"

Haslewood went off to see about it and returned presently to report: "Captain Anderson says he can't possibly spare a single man; they are expecting something to happen every minute."

"Well," I began, "I must have an escort from somewhere. . . ."

Bang—pip! Bang—pip! Haslewood flew to his maxim gun. I remained motionless. I caught sight of the native head approaching.

"A report from Esan Kwanta, sir," he said. "One of the men of this village returned last night and this morning reported to me that yesterday afternoon when he was at Esan Kwanta he saw the escort from Esumeja arrive and heard the headman tell them that they must not go on as Dompuassi was full of Adansis."

"Did he hear if E Company had gone on to Kwisa?"

"Yaas, sir, they had a fight at Dompuassi first and then went on."

Too late, I thought. Wilson would have a formidable task to fight his way back. It will be helping the Ashanti Field Force, which I feel sure must be coming, but I must see that if he is in difficulties they extricate him. I went towards the office to write when I caught sight of a messenger whom I recognized as our messenger whom I had sent to Kumasi for the second time on June 11th. I signalled to the native head and we all three entered the office. The messenger handed me back my message saying, "Information troops close up hope general advance within week's time." He had failed to take it into Kumasi or catch up the Governor's messenger. Through the medium of the interpreter he said he was very sorry; he got frightened at the very last moment. He saw stockades on all the main paths round Kumasi to which he was able to approach, remaining five days in the bush. He saw no sorties by the garrison during these five days, and was certain that the Governor had not broken out up to the previous evening, June 17th.

Turning to the interpreter, I said, "Ask the man if he would make a third attempt to take another message."

The messenger shook his head but said he would be willing to do spy work outside Kumasi. This I gladly accepted and he was instructed when he had had a rest to join the scouts at the Ardra river, half way to Kumasi, and work up the left bank towards Kumasi and listen for any sounds of firing from that direction, and if any was heard to pass it back with the utmost speed. The man nodded and both withdrew.

I followed and saw an escort coming into the village. I recognized it as the one I had sent off with a letter to Captain Wilson, ordering his immediate return on my receipt of the news that Kwisa had been evacuated. They handed it to me back. I knew what that meant. Explanations followed. It appeared that E Company, finding Dompuassi strongly held, launched a strong attack, completely defeating the enemy and driving them out of the village which the company occupied. After a halt, Captain Wilson recommenced his advance on Kwisa, leaving armed Beckwais who had followed him from Esan Kwanta to hold Dompuassi. Unfortunately fear and the temptation of looting were too much for the Beckwai levies. They helped themselves to some articles and started returning to Esan Kwanta, when they were met by the escort, which was told that Captain Wilson had gone on to Kwisa, so the escort continued on and were considerably alarmed by the sight of so many Ashanti dead, and on approaching the village of Dompuassi, seeing some of the Ashantis had returned to it, hesitated to enter and after waiting some time decided to return to Esumeja and to report what had happened.

I felt that it was a bad error of judgment on Wilson's part to have allowed the armed Beckwais to hold Dompuassi for him, and that to get back again he would have to do what Lieutenant-Colonel Carter with his six hundred failed to do. True, he would be protecting the Ashanti Field Force, but I feared at a great sacrifice. It was obvious that Colonel Willcocks must be warned in case Wilson should be unable to return. I therefore wrote a full report of the circumstances as related above, pointing out "the dangerous situation in

which Captain Wilson is now placed" and begging that the "force here be augmented with all despatch"? I further reported the failure of the messenger to get to Kumasi.

I had the report despatched and went over to relieve Haslewood who was in charge of one of the maxim guns. I briefly gave him the news, and told him to go and get something to eat and see if any reports had come in of any signs from Kumasi.

The gun detachment drew my attention to movements of the Ashantis in the thick cover at the end of the long vistas we had cut. They showed no inclination to expose themselves and we were content not to waste our ammunition. Edwards, however, had spotted them too. He came up and remarked that his blood could not stand this damned cheek; might he and his men go for them.

"By all means," I said, "but be careful not to get involved."

A few minutes later a few shots rang out. Edwards was back again laughingly remarking that they had "got no fight in them."

As the day wore on and no attack came our spirits rose. But everyone was wondering where Wilson was and wishing he would hurry back.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

A Midnight Incident

I WAS sitting on a low stool about ten inches high, carved in one piece out of a cotton-tree, by the glow of a smouldering fire, curling upwards through the roof of the last hut in the village and nearest to where the path from the coast entered the place. It was the hut of the native Intelligence Service, and I had come to have a talk with him to try and elucidate the mystery of the absolute silence at Kokofu and a lack of any definite news from Kumasi. The night was cold and wet. All that evening I was restless. The others were kept busy seeing that their men were on the alert, every man being out on duty. From time to time I visited the officers, but the circumstances were not conducive to conversation: we were all wondering what was going to happen, and when.

I asked the native head of Intelligence what he made of it.

The man sat looking into the fire in deep thought, then after a pause exclaimed, "There is something amiss, but what it is I am not able to tell you yet. There is bad news somewhere."

I asked him if he thought that it could have anything to do with the Governor being able to escape to-day and that Kokofu has heard the news.

"No, sir," the man answered, "the Governor has not escaped; he is still in Kumasi; our scouts must have heard the firing if he had, for even if the Governor's messenger you sent back with instructions what to do was ready to guide Kumasi out, it could not have been done without first tackling one of the stockades."

We relapsed into silence, which was again broken by the Interpreter, in evident excitement, suddenly exclaiming:

"I have got it, sir! Your White Captain with the company must have fought and beaten the Adansis! There will be good news for us soon, sir."

"I certainly hope so, Interpreter," I said heartily. "Bother that beastly weird sound—there it is again; for goodness sake go and find out what it is; it's getting on my nerves."

I sat listening. There it was again—and another and still another. They seemed to be answering one another. What did it mean?

I went out. In the darkness I saw approaching a group of natives headed by the Interpreter.

"It is all right, sir," he repeated; "it is only the Beckwais attracting our attention. They dared not come near the sentries until they received an answering call. I gave it and the sentry passed them through. They have brought a messenger with a letter for you, sir."

Taking the letter and telling the Interpreter to let the Beckwais and the messenger rest in one of the huts and then to follow me to his own hut, I sat down on the stool again, stirred up the fire, and by its glow opened the letter. It was from Colonel Willcocks, and ran:

Camp Prahsu,
June 12, 1900.

Captain Hall or other officer at or near Beckwai or Esumeja.

SIR,

I request you will keep by every means in your power the Governor or garrison of Kumasi informed of the real state of affairs. Spare no effort or expense as it is now evidently *seulement un cas de peu de jours.*

2. I have in several letters explained everything I can to you. You seem to be unaware (judging from your letters) that the Main Column, as you term it, consists of little more than your own garrison and that this "Main Column" has had continuous fighting to remain where it is with so many *blessés.*

3. Relief is coming, but relief without food or m—i—ons *de guerre* is useless as has been proved over and over again by yourself and others who have followed you, as it has simply come to a matter of the troops *qui vient apres vous* constantly trying to keep up the

*goli bārrĭd** of which everyone seems to be short after a few days' fighting. Under such circumstances relief only *ajoute aux besoins* of the garrison of Kumasi.

4. I hope by *quinzième* the Sierra Leone carriers will be here; they are travelling slowly I fear as the bridges, etc., from Cape C. have been *détruits par des averses.* Send on enclosed to Governor by some means.

J. WILLCOCKS, Colonel,
Commanding A.F.F.

I felt staggered. Not a word about his coming up! He had got my letter and the urgent appeal of the Governor; this was his reply, and only explanations leaving me absolutely in the dark as to his movements.

Looking up, I saw the Interpreter watching me intently. He had quietly slipped in so as not to disturb me.

"Nothing doing," I said. "This is not your good news you spoke about just now. Never mind, the good news will no doubt come; let us have the messenger in and see what information he can give us."

Seated on stools and the fire replenished, the three of us tried to fathom what was going on in our rear. The messenger was quick to grasp our object and told his own story slowly so that every word could be interpreted and understood by me.

I gathered that before the messenger started from Prahsu he saw several white men with one company and one maxim leave Prahsu for Fumsu with a convoy. I at once made a mental note that this must be B Company 2nd W.A.F.F. which my escort told me was at Prahsu when the escort left Fumsu for Esumeja on the morning of June 12th. The messenger went on that there were several white officers and at least fifty soldiers still left at Prahsu when he started.

When he reached Fumsu he found the place full of soldiers, carriers, and a great number of white men. He was told it was not safe to go on. All the soldiers had to come back from Kwisa and a lot of white miners from Obuassi. The Ashantis had spread reports warning everybody that if they went on beyond Fumsu they would be human sacrificed. He had been

* Ammunition.

told that many soldiers and carriers had already been treated in that way. Everybody was saying that the Governor and all those who came out of Kumasi a few days previously had been wiped out, and if the garrison at Esumeja was not already destroyed it could not last much longer, so he made up his mind to stay at Fumsu. He saw some wounded white men and soldiers there. He also saw several white officers and plenty of soldiers go off to Obuassi. He wanted to hand his letter over to some white man at Fumsu, but was told that he must take the letter on as the road was quite safe to Obuassi where soldiers had already gone. He did so. When he got to Obuassi he saw there a white officer and soldiers who had left Fumsu and several other white men and the native police. When he got to Yakabu he saw five white men and many soldiers. That was this evening.

"What!" I exclaimed. "At Yakabu to-day and past Akrokerri?"

"Yes, sir, it is true, absolutely true."

I felt my heart beating.

"Had they had any fighting?" I queried.

"No, sir, they told me they had not seen a single Adansi fighting man nor a stockade of any kind, and were surprised that the Adansis did not come over and fight them. The road is quite safe now."

Yes, I thought—and so evidently did the Interpreter, for he smiled—that was Captain Wilson and E Company who had done this; no wonder Kokofu was silent. Well done, Wilson, I hope you will be suitably rewarded; you deserve it.

The messenger continued his story. He reached Beckwai. There was great excitement in the palace; they gave him some Beckwai men, it being then late, to show him the way to Esumeja.

"One question more, messenger. Tell me exactly what troops you saw at Fumsu on June 15th."

A long description followed, from which I gathered that there were there on that day four companies of the 1st and 2nd W.A.F.F., two companies of the 3rd W.A.F.F., a weak company of Gold Coast Constabulary, some seven to eight hundred rank and file, with two guns and four maxims.

The thought flashed on me that Colonel Willcocks said in his letter, which was dated six days ago, something about "relief is coming." I pulled out the letter from the envelope to read it again, when my eye caught sight of a piece of paper fluttering towards the fire. I caught it only just in the nick of time. It was the message to be sent to the Governor in Kumasi, for, unfolding it, I read the words, "Troops would arrive at Beckwai on June 20th if possible."

I could hardly believe my eyes; the Ashanti Field Force was coming, its advance guard would be at Beckwai to-morrow afternoon and the rest next day, June 20th. Thank God. We might save Kumasi yet, and looking at the Interpreter I said, "Your good news has come at last; the Big Colonel is coming," and so carried away was I at the news, for it was nearly midnight, that I shook both men violently by the hand, told the Interpreter to tell the messenger to be ready to leave to-morrow with a letter to Colonel Willcocks, and, giving final instructions to the Interpreter for the morning's work, I withdrew.

Outside I felt exhilarated. I made my way in the cold, moisture-laden night air to the various posts to tell them the good news. I returned, feeling as if I was walking on air, to turn into my valise. I had almost done so when suddenly and almost inexplicably the fear seized me that we should be done in at Esumeja just as victory was within our grasp. I could not shake the idea off. I turned in to sleep; I could not do so. The fear increased; it was that the Beckwais on the morrow would join the rebels; Queen Ashantuah had anticipated the Ashanti Field Force.

So real did the fear become that I got up again and made my way to the hut of the native Intelligence, woke him up, and accompanied by him went to the hut were the Beckwais who had escorted the messenger were sleeping. They were awakened and instructed to start back as soon as they possibly could and inform the King of Beckwai and his people that the Big White Colonel was coming with his soldiers to Beckwai, and would be there before the sun went down again. I felt happier and turned in again.

Refreshed with a few hours' sleep and turning out before

dawn, I found everybody in high spirits, increasing hourly as the morning progressed. They realized that they had entered the last lap of the struggle for victory. The winning post was in sight; there was needed only the final spurt in defending Esumeja against the coming attack. Hang on Kumasi, we shall hold fast here. Never mind if you do come out; you will be all right. We shall sell ourselves dearly in keeping the Ashantis at Kokofu, the Ashanti Field Force will be up in time to continue the attack, while you in Kumasi reach safety in the Denkera country.

Thus may be summarized our feelings on that morning of June 19th. I had been a round of the posts; it was the same report throughout, that all the Ashanti outposts were quiet and so far there were no indications of an impending attack. I had also visited the native head, who had collected reports from the relieved native scouts who had been watching for signs from Kumasi or any movements from Kokofu. He reported that there were no indications of anything unusual in either place. We could only await events and took up the matter of securing a messenger to carry out Colonel Willcocks's request to have his enclosure sent on to the Governor by some means.

I kept repeating to myself the last two words of that message, "if possible." I read Colonel Willcocks's letter again. He stated that he hoped that by the 15th the Sierra Leone carriers would be at Prahsu. From what the messenger told me last night there was concentrated at Fumsu, on that same day, June 15th, the bulk of the Ashanti Field Force. Last evening the advance portion of this force was at Yakabu in Beckwai territory, and the road from Fumsu clear of the enemy; so Colonel Willcocks was about to fulfil his promise of reaching Beckwai on June 20th. It was clear that he added the words "if possible" to his message as the only safe course to adopt on June 12th when he replied to my letter enclosing the Governor's appeal. It clearly showed that he felt he was not in a position to fix a definite date of the arrival of the Ashanti Field Force. But how would the Governor take it when he got Colonel Willcocks's message? The Governor would conclude that the troops at Esumeja were never there, and the

report of a safe way out for the Kumasi garrison was a mere canard. One could imagine him ejaculating, "Why, they only arrive at Beckwai on June 20th and that is not certain, and they may not be there yet." This won't do, I thought, I must amplify the message and explain matters.

I went off to find the native head to see if he could secure a volunteer to take on the message. All our efforts were futile in spite of an offer of £100; so I wrote and despatched to Colonel Willcocks a report on the situation. Here is the actual letter I wrote:

From Captain W. M. Hall Commanding Advanced Troops.
To Officer Commanding Ashanti Field Force.

Esumeja,
1 p.m., June 19th.

1. Your letter of June 12th with enclosure for His Excellency the Governor arrived last night. I also found in the packet a letter for Mr. Burke, Obuassi, which I am returning per bearer.

2. I hear from the bearer that five white men with troops and carriers reached Yakabu last night, but I have received no notification of it from the officer commanding that party.

3. I also believe that my message of yesterday *re* E Company 1st W.A.F.F. was seen by the officer of that column and that may account for my not hearing definitely of his approach to Beckwai.

4. There is a good road from Atobiassi (near Yakabu) to Dompuassi, distance one and a half hours (three miles).

5. I have great apprehension of the safety of E Company; they got through Dompuassi on 17th instant having had a fight from, I am told, 9 to 1 p.m. and no more firing was heard on that day, but next morning firing was heard by Esan Kwanta men, but whether it was E Company or Beckwai men I cannot find out, but the escort state that they only heard a few native shots.

6. The situation here is unchanged, no further communications have been received from Kumasi, neither has any firing been heard in that direction. I am constantly patrolling the paths and the enemy are still concentrated at Kokofu.

7. I have failed so far in getting a man to take your letter to Kumasi although I have done everything in my power, but I believe that my other messenger of June 2nd got in all right.

W. Montagu Hall, Captain,
Commanding Esumeja.

The afternoon wore on. Not a sign of E Company coming back, not a sign of the Kumasis moving south from Karsi, no attack from Kokofu. The suspense was agonizing. I could not believe that Queen Ashantuah would miss her last chance of capturing Esumeja. It must be only a question of minutes now when the Ashanti Field Force would be reaching Beckwai.

Darkness fell. The moon shone through the tree-tops, the shadows deepened, and the posting of sentries for the night was in full swing, when a shout went up, "A messenger, a messenger!" He could be clearly seen in the moonlight, standing on the path waving a letter in his hand. He was hurried along and almost pushed to where I was standing just outside the Rest House, to which I had been drawn by the shouts. Cheering had already broken out, the good-natured messenger having told of the arrival of soldiers at Beckwai. The news was passed along and the cheering taken up by every post; it was a never-to-be-forgotten incident and the letter announcing it was as follows:

From Major P. S. Wilkinson.
To Captain Hall.

Beckwai,
5 p.m., June 19, 1900.

SIR,

I arrived here an hour ago with eight Europeans, two maxims, and two hundred and fifty R. & F.

Please let me know—

(1) The exact strength of your force at Esumeja.
(2) Your reserves of European and native rations.
(3) Your reserve of ammunition for maxims, carbines, and 75-mm. gun.

Also all the above information as it applies to Captain Wilson's party at Kwisa.

If your runners to him have not got through, do not again try to recall him before hearing from me. The position of Kwisa is fairly secure now, the bush down to the water having been cleared.

I have the honour to be, sir,
Your obedient servant,
P. S. WILKINSON, Major,
Commanding Advance Column.

This letter meant business. The Field Force were coming all right, but I felt far from happy about Captain Wilson. He would be tackling the Adansis again at Dompuassi, in his effort to get back to Esumeja, and although he would be covering the advance of the troops following up via Obuassi, I felt more than ever that a helping hand should be extended to him by the Ashanti Field Force. I hoped that action would at once be taken on the receipt of the letter I had already sent off at 1 p.m. to Colonel Willcocks, but I must again mention the matter to Major Wilkinson. I lost no time in collecting the necessary information asked for, sat down, and wrote the following reply to Major Wilkinson.

From Captain W. M. Hall, Commanding Esumeja.
To Officer Commanding Advance Column.

Esumeja,
June 19th.

SIR,

I heard from native sources that you were on your way to Beckwai but not hearing from you I thought you were still some way out and did not come in to see you, but I will do so to-morrow morning.

The answers to your queries are appended; you will notice we have no European rations.

With reference to Captain Wilson I hear again to-day that he has got on to Kwisa and that the Adansis have collected again at Dompuassi; therefore it is imperative to warn him of the danger unless further troops are marching to Kwisa from Fumsu.

I am still ignorant of the movements of D Company W.A.F.F.

W. MONTAGU HALL,
Captain.

Handing over the letter to the waiting messenger, who at once started back to Beckwai, I took one more look round the various posts before turning in. All was serene. The village looked so peaceful in the moonlight, but clouds were again gathering. A storm was brewing. Would the dawn bring another storm, Queen Ashantuah's last chance?

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

Is It Death in Kumasi?

"ASHANTIS are coming, sir!"

I sprang out of my valise. It was one of Captain Haslewood's maxim gun detachment. He had been sent to call me. He reported that the Ashantis could be seen moving about. A round of the posts confirmed it. I hastily summoned a soldier runner to stand by to take a message to Major Wilkinson at Beckwai for reinforcements as soon as I was satisfied that an attack was really coming and that the situation demanded help.

So far neither side had fired a shot. Both seemed content to watch what the other was going to do. For quite two hours this continued. I was puzzled. The longer Queen Ashantuah put off her attack the less her chances of success with the Ashanti Field Force coming up. There must be something else up. I racked my brains. It dawned on me in a flash. Queen Ashantuah had got wind from the Kumassis at Karsi that the Governor was about to break out of Kumasi, or had actually done so, and she was moving her army from Kokofu to intercept him under cover of the Ashantis threatening Esumeja. It was the 20th of June, and nine days after the latest date to which the Governor had stated that he could possibly hold out.

Advancing along the path towards Kokofu, I ordered Captain Haslewood with his maxim gun detachment to dismount the maxim and advance with it to the cross paths, where our outpost line was established and in contact with the Ashantis. I followed with a reserve detachment under a native N.C.O.

I ordered fire to be opened all along our outpost line, which had previously been reinforced. There was a sharp crack of the carbine, and ping-ping-ping of the maxim, followed by a

roar of Dane guns. Then silence for fully two minutes, when two solitary Dane guns boomed out, obviously signal guns. The Ashantis were observed withdrawing. The scouts were sent forward and, working with sagacity and caution, reported that the Ashantis were continuing to withdraw towards Kokofu. I sent forward a strong patrol. It was some time, nearly half an hour, before I received a report from them that they had found the burnt village deserted and after passing through had ascertained that the old battle front defending Kokofu was strongly held and the enemy prepared to defend it. The patrol thereupon withdrew to the burnt village to await further instructions.

The situation was perfectly clear; I was wrong after all. It was clear that Queen Ashantuah was not moving her army away. She was expecting that the White Captain's word, "One day, two days, one week, two weeks," was about to be carried out now that the Ashanti Field Force had reached Beckwai; so she had sent forward her men to Esumeja to give her ample warning. Needless to say, we left her alone. I returned to Esumeja more convinced than ever that the plan I had sent Colonel Willcocks of relieving Kumasi by a flank march from Beckwai via Pekki and feinting on Kokofu was, in view of its urgency, the correct one, and I hoped he would now carry it out. He must see that it was the best way of saving the English ladies and three thousand starving civilians in Kumasi. He could deal with Queen Ashantuah after he had brought them all back to Beckwai. He would have the six or seven hundred soldiers in Kumasi to help him in addition to his own command.

As I reached Esumeja I caught sight of the native head. I had a bone to pick with him and beckoned him to me.

"Look here, Interpreter," I began, "where have you been all the morning? I particularly wanted to know the reports your scouts gave of their vigil near Kumasi."

"Oh, Massah, I am so sorry; the messenger who came in last evening with the letter told me something. I wanted to follow it up. I saw that the native scouts dared not go out this morning, so many Ashantis about and those watching near Kumasi would be keeping away from Esumeja, so I thought

I would go into Beckwai to find out more about what the messenger told me. I am sorry I have not good news to tell you, sir."

"Well, what is it?"

"Oh, sir, no more soldiers coming to Beckwai; the Big White Colonel is not coming."

"What do you mean?" I thundered.

The man hesitated for a moment and then said:

"The soldiers that have arrived at Beckwai are not enough. When they come to Esumeja you will be no stronger than you were before you sent back the two companies. There are no more soldiers coming up. There is not an officer or a soldier on their way from Fumsu. The Adansi army is in force at Dompuassi and even if Colonel Willcocks does start from Fumsu in the next few days, he will have to fight the Adansi army. There is no help from E Company now; they must all be dead."

"Look here, man, are you absolutely certain that the troops are not following up with the Big White Colonel?"

"Massah, massah, my word on it, Beckwais word on it, the new soldiers themselves on it. So sorry, sir, to have to tell you this, but it is true."

I could see he was telling me the truth. It was terrible news; all hope of relieving the Governor must now be abandoned. There was nothing left but for the white ladies and the three thousand civilians to face the ordeal of breaking out with the Governor.

Why did not Colonel Willcocks follow up? He had at least three hundred more soldiers available, and these three hundred men would have been quite sufficient to make the flank march via Pekki and relieve Kumasi, now that the Achimas were out of the way, while Major Wilkinson and I at Esumeja could have hurled ourselves on to the Ashanti army at Kokofu had they attempted to interfere with the relieving force. The troops now at Beckwai and Esumeja were too few to do both operations. It would be fatal to attempt them.

There was only one hope left that the Governor's own messenger had told those in Kumasi the way to safety. I was

thankful that I had not succeeded in getting a messenger to take to Kumasi Colonel Willcocks's message to the Governor. It was too awful to think of the Governor receiving it and hoping for relief when there was no hope. One thing was clear. Major Wilkinson and I must do nothing heroic to mar the chances of those in Kumasi making a successful escape.

With the coming of dawn on June 21st the situation at Esumeja had not materially changed. Reliefs and parades there were none, for every man was on duty, broken only by solitary men passing to and from their quarters in the village. The silence to-day was intense; yet we knew that facing us in the direction of Kokofu, Ashanti scouts and groups watching us were hidden in the thick undergrowth. Patrol after patrol returned from the direction of Kumasi, reporting that the scouts and watchers were confident that no firing had begun in the neighbourhood of Kumasi, nor had any movement taken place from Kokofu in that direction.

At nightfall that evening, when all the reports had been collected, it was evident that the enemy and the Governor were content to do nothing that day. How much longer could this go on? We were puzzled and not a little alarmed; it was so uncanny. We missed the bangs and pips, and, as one of the officers put it, he did not mind fighting but he could not stand this awful silence; if only the war drumming would start once more and let him feel alive again. Yet he knew that beyond the cross paths to Kokofu, only 2,400 yards distant, and in the five war camps around that town, were twenty thousand Ashantis, waiting and thirsting for our blood, and at that cross path we stood facing each other, each hidden in the dense jungle forest and each conscious of the other's presence.

That evening was particularly hot and sultry. There was a break in the rain and that stillness which so often heralds the approach of a thunderstorm. There was an uncanny feeling that something was going to happen. We were all eyes and ears for any sign from Kumasi.

"What's that?" somebody remarked. "That's not a Dane gun. There's another!"

I looked at my watch; it was 8.5 p.m. There was another.

"That's big gun firing, I'm sure," said somebody.

Still another. There was a pause. Then another sound—five separate and distinct ones. There could be no doubt about it. It must be a 7-pounder and in the direction of Kumasi too. We looked at each other.

"I am certain," says one; "I am certain," says another, and when some minutes afterwards scouts came running in and reported that they had heard ten shots fired in two lots of five from the direction of Kumasi, I had no doubt in my mind that this was the signal for Kumasi coming out to-morrow; they knew we must be near.

I therefore ordered Sergeant Griggs to fire two star shells at extreme elevation from the 75-mm. gun. I should have liked to have answered round for round but we only had nine available. I wrote and despatched an urgent call to Major Wilkinson.

The firing of those two star shells in the darkness of the still African forest was most weird and impressive. It echoed and re-echoed through the jungle. We waited and listened—no answering gun was heard.

A little after midnight the reply from Major Wilkinson came. It ran:

To Captain Hall.

11.15 p.m., June 21st.

I am coming to join you with two hundred and forty men. Have fifty men ready to go on with me if necessary and one maxim and the 75-mm. gun.

P. S. WILKINSON, Major,
Commanding Advance Column.

"To go on if necessary"—a laudable effort but fatal; it would be playing Queen Ashantuah's game. She had been tempting me in vain for weeks past to go on. She and the Beckwais knew that the crisis must be fought out at Esumeja. To leave Esumeja behind us with a garrison of only eighty-five effective men with one maxim and an undefeated Ashanti army only 3,100 yards east of Esumeja would be a fatal blunder. It could

only have one result; Esumeja captured, Wilkinson and his force followed up and driven with the Governor's troops and civil population of three thousand back into Kumasi. The Beckwais would then join the rebellion and the whole country between Prahsu and Kumasi, a distance of seventy miles, would be held, stockaded, and barred for both Wilkinson at Kumasi and Willcocks advancing from Prahsu. God help the three thousand starving civil population. No, it seemed to me, an escape from Kumasi was now possible. We had only got to hold the Ashantis to Kokofu and the Governor ought to be able to force his way out. He had seven hundred troops, three hundred levies, and twenty British officers to do it with, and the route, except for a stockade, was now clear for him.

Nothing, however, could have been more welcome than the arrival of Major Wilkinson and his command. They had made a most trying night march. The thunderstorm that had been threatening all day broke in all its fury that night, a real tropical downpour. The column arrived soaked to the skin and glad to obtain what little shelter we could offer. A more depressing scene could not well be imagined, yet not a word of grumbling. Everybody knew the stern duty they had been called up to carry out and they meant to do it. In a short time I explained everything to Major Wilkinson, who at once grasped the situation.

All the morning long we kept Queen Ashantuah on tenter-hooks. She seemed sure we were coming to attack her. The boom of a Dane gun rang out whenever we pushed forward scouts and patrols. We were satisfied that her army was massed behind their defences at Kokofu. Report after report came in of no signs from Kumasi and the Ashantis at Kokofu still in position. It looked like no attempt being made by the Governor to come out that day. Major Wilkinson, therefore, decided to strengthen the garrison at Esumeja with 3rd W.A.F.F. under Captain H. V. Shortland with Lieutenant Danniels and to return with the rest of his command to Beckwai to give confidence to the King and act as a reserve to us.

Before they left I learned from the officers about what happened in our rear, of the fight at Dompuassi on June 6th, and how Colour-Sergeant Mackenzie with D Company had saved the situation. They told me, too, of their wait at Kwisa till June 14th and a reason for their further retirement. Captain Melliss, with F Company and a convoy, had arrived there and reported that the Governor had written to say that he could only hold out till June 11th. Captain Melliss had also reported that he had had a severe fight at Sherimassi, losing his bugler killed and Corporal Philpot, West Yorkshire Regiment, and several men wounded and that his orders were to return at once with his company to Prahsu. On the way up Lieutenant-Colonel Carter had had a severe fight too at Sherimassi, losing four men killed, so that place was regarded as a second Dompuassi.

Without Captain Melliss's company it was considered madness to attempt to force Dompuassi again, besides it was generally agreed that it would be too late to save Kumasi, the date having already passed.

The decision had therefore to be made whether to be besieged at Kwisa, or to retire and force Sherimassi in the greatest possible strength. A council of war with the three senior officers was therefore held and the decision taken to evacuate Kwisa next morning, June 14th, and to consult Colonel Willcocks by telegraph with a view to a fresh advance with more troops being made by the alternative route.*

On arrival at Fumsu it was found that the garrison had been increased by the arrival of two convoys, the first escorted by fifty men of F Company and the second by Captain Beddoes and his company, B Company 2nd W.A.F.F. This taxed the

* "Captain Melliss reached Kwisa on June 13th and Carter decided to retire with the combined column to Fumsu. This decision was contrary to my orders, but Carter had just seen a letter from the Governor in Kumasi (which did not reach me till June 12th) asking for urgent help, and he intended with my sanction to move from Fumsu, via Obuassi Gold Mines, to Beckwai. He therefore used his own discretion and evacuated Kwisa." —Colonel Willcocks's Official Despatches. *London Gazette*, December 4, 1900.

capacity of Fumsu to the utmost, four companies of 1st and 2nd W.A.F.F., with four maxims, two companies 3rd W.A.F.F., detachment of Gold Coast Constabulary and one 7-pounder gun and one rocket tube, some seven hundred men excluding wounded and details left behind by my command.

After further questioning I was able to follow the course of events at Fumsu. It appeared that the first thought on reaching Fumsu was for the Governor and the necessity of warning him against coming via Kwisa, should he have succeeded in breaking out, the route being heavily stockaded. The only way to do this was to get a message through to Esumeja at once and warn me of the position.

The next thing they thought of at Fumsu was the possibility of carrying out the flank march which I had urged in my appeal as, with the arrival of the reinforcements, they had some seven hundred men available.

One of the officers explained to me: "We talked the scheme over. We admitted that there was very little hope of the Governor getting out. We saw the advantage of going via Obuassi, thus avoiding Sherimassi, and with our very much larger force we could hope to defeat the Adansis when they opposed us near Dompuassi."

"What a pity," I interrupted. "You fellows missed the chance of your lives of saving Kumasi. Had you started from Fumsu with seven hundred men we should have available here at this moment another four hundred and fifty men who could have carried out the flank march via Beckwai and Pekki and fetched those in Kumasi out."

There was a silence. Then one of them said: "You really want to know the reason why we did not do it?"

I nodded.

"Well, if the Governor could not get out with his seven hundred men, how the devil were we to get in with the same number?"

I dropped the subject and asked what happened next at Fumsu, when they got back from Kwisa.

"We telegraphed to Colonel Willcocks at Prahsu the state

of affairs and awaited his reply. We knew very well that there would be the devil to pay and Willcocks furious at our retiring, but we couldn't do anything else."

They confided to me that Colonel Willcocks had also to be informed that a number of Europeans at Obuassi were thinking of bolting, although Mr. Burke was going to stick it to the last.

I tried to picture Colonel Willcocks's feelings on receiving these telegrams. I could easily follow that he, too, had abandoned all idea of relieving Kumasi. Instead, he had decided to hold out a helping hand to the Governor should he succeed in breaking out.

"So I suppose Colonel Willcocks telegraphed you off with three hundred men and that nice little message for myself?"

"Yes, and how the devil were we going to get to Beckwai? We were not to leave Obuassi—where, by the way, we found that the Europeans had got wind of our retirement from Kwisa and twenty-two of them had bolted—with a garrison of less than one officer and fifty men. This meant that we should have to face the Dompuassi Adansis with only two hundred and fifty men once more, and this time in a fight with only half the number we had before."

"But you got through without firing a shot."

"Yes, thanks to Wilson. We saw your note* that Wilson was at Esan Kwanta and starting to attack Dompuassi on that very day; so you bet we pushed on and got through."

Poor Wilson; we both wondered where he was at that moment.

The fall-in sounded, Major Wilkinson and his men fell in, and they moved off on their return journey to Beckwai, tired and worn out. There was no rest for us. Two hours later a cry went up at Esumeja, "Messengers from Kumasi!" Two worn and weary natives were brought up to me. One of them undid the hem of his loin cloth and handed me a note. It was in French and translated read:

* This letter reporting the departure of E Company was sent off from Esumeja via Obuassi at 9 a.m., June 16th.

Kumasi,
June 17, 1900.

We have found means with the greatest difficulty to keep us here still until Wednesday the 20th inclusive. It is of all necessity that you arrive on this date at the latest. If this message reaches you reply to me immediately in order to let me know where you are and when you will arrive here. The rebels will make their last effort between Karsi and here. You have to capture at least two stockades. It is very imperative that the relief column brings with it as great a quantity of food as possible. Understand if you please that this is our last effort to await your arrival here.

(*Signed*) F. M. HODGSON.

While I was reading this letter the native head had started interrogating the messengers and in a short time I was able to follow what had happened. It was known in Kumasi that we were at Esumeja, but some people were saying that we had moved on to Ordahsu, while others maintained that Kokofu and the troops at Esumeja were fighting and we could not come up. The messengers were told to take this letter to the White Officer somewhere near Ordahsu, but instead they brought it to Esumeja via Pekki. Their friends told them it would be safer and, moving only by night, they had taken five days to do it.

The situation, then, as I summed it up was as follows: The Governor wants to know where we are, at Ordahsu or Esumeja. He must think at Ordahsu, as he allows so short a time for a reply. He does not get it on the 20th of June. He decides to wait another day and to fire his signal guns that evening, reasoning that if the relief column is at Ordahsu they must hear them. Did they hear the two answering signal guns we gave? If so, that may account for their not coming out to-day. They may be waiting for us and will probably be repeating the signals again to-night. If so, I shall certainly not answer them. It is most imperative they should come out at once; it is the only hope of saving them; however, a very careful watch will be kept to-night for any signal guns from Kumasi, and if they do fire and get no reply, I hope it will convey to them that they were mistaken the night before and that we

are nowhere near and they must come out in the direction planned for them.

I made a copy of the Governor's letter and sent the original with the messengers under an escort to Major Wilkinson at Beckwai.

That night no signal guns were heard. I had ordered an increased number of scouts and watchers to be sent forward so as to maintain a continuous day and night duty.

There was the usual fall-in an hour before dawn next morning, June 23rd. All reports were that Queen Ashantuah's men were only watching us and acting on the defensive.

We were enjoying a wee inroad into the boxes of European rations when we were attracted by a scout running towards the Rest House. We learnt that he had distinctly heard firing near Kumasi and had rushed in to tell us.

This must be it this time. I thereupon sat down and wrote a letter to Major Wilkinson reporting the matter and had it despatched.

I felt my heart throbbing with excitement. Inwardly I prayed forgiveness from those in Kumasi for putting them through this ordeal, which, terrible as it was, I was convinced was the only way of saving them from death by starvation or massacre.

My thoughts were cut short by the arrival of a second scout. He reported that he heard some firing about 6 a.m. It did not last long, so he did not come in to report it and there had been no firing since.

I was disappointed when further reports came in of no further firing near Kumasi. What a pity, everything was so peaceful at Kokofu, and what a chance to have got away from Kumasi. There was nothing more to be done. I duly received Major Wilkinson's reply as follows:

To Captain Hall.

Beckwai,
June 23rd.

I received your letter *re* firing at Kumasi and will be ready to act if it is confirmed.

P. S. WILKINSON, Major,
Commanding Advance Column.

Is It Death in Kumasi?

That evening all ears at Esumeja were strained in the direction of Kumasi to listen for a repetition of the signals. None was heard. What had happened? Had the exodus taken place after all?

Hours of terrible suspense were in store for Major Wilkinson and myself. For six days and nights, during which Kokofu remained on the defensive, the reports each day only added to our alarm. Not a sound from Kumasi, not a word from the Governor. Were they still there, dying of starvation, their hearts failing them at the last moment? This must not be. Must Major Wilkinson and I put into operation our *sauve qui peut* plan? The signal must come from me. I seemed to hear the screams of the women and children on their knees to the swarming Ashanti hordes intercepting them in their frantic haste to escape along the jungle path. I put the thought from me. Esumeja and Beckwai must hold fast. The native rumours that they are out must be true.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

The Exodus

A MORE depressing dawn than that which broke over Kumasi on June 23rd would be difficult to imagine.

The surroundings of the Fort were wrapped in a dense, clammy, white mist which deadened and rendered uncanny the sounds made by the refugees, some three thousand in number, as they moved about preparing for departure, the loads balanced on their heads and hanging from their shoulders, making them assume grotesque shapes as the rays of a lantern fell upon them for a moment before they were again swallowed up in the mist. The carriers sat shivering on their loads, chilled to the bone, while the Hausas stood in silence waiting for the order to march.

Since the termination of the armistice, on the afternoon of May 15th, the situation in Kumasi had become worse and worse. Fortunately a force under the command of Major Morris, D.S.O., arrived at Kumasi while the armistice was still in force and was allowed to pass the stockade into Kumasi. This brought the strength of the garrison up to twenty officers and seven hundred and forty Hausas. This newly arrived force had covered three hundred and forty miles in twenty days from Gambaga in the Northern Territories, and *en route*, when twelve miles from Kumasi, had engaged and captured a stockade, Major Morris and eighteen Hausas being wounded. Although in numerical strength it was slightly weaker than the force under the command of Captain Aplin, C.M.G., which succeeded in entering Kumasi on April 29th, the former brought in 46,000 rounds of ammunition in addition to its 7-pounder and ammunition, as compared with the 9,000 rounds of the latter.

The sudden termination of the armistice came as a bitter disappointment to the Acting Resident. He believed, when the Ashantis brought in such large quantities of food and allowed Major Morris's force to enter Kumasi, that the rebel chiefs really meant to make peace. He blamed the refugees in Kumasi for preventing it. Here is what he writes in his book, *The Ashanti Campaign of 1900:*

"The rebels round Kumasi had strictly observed the armistice, and Major Morris's column had found two strong stockades behind the ruined Wesleyan Mission House which, together with a large war camp, had been undefended.

"Unfortunately the civilian Hausa refugees heard of this from the incoming Hausas and, thinking that the rebels had, with the arrival of Major Morris's column, decided to raise the siege, off they rushed to loot the war camp on the N'Koranza road. Ten minutes later heavy firing was heard in the direction of 'Krobo,' and presently a gang of civilian Hausas came to me to complain that the rebels had fired on them and killed six men. In my vexation at finding the negotiations brought to nothing through the looting propensities of these useless civilian Hausas, I told them that I wished the Ashantis had killed them all, and after interviewing the kings, sent off their messengers to the rebel camp to explain that the civilian Hausas had entered 'Krobo' camp unknown to the white man. Explanations were, however, of no use, for the Ashantis considered that we had broken the armistice and refused to have anything further to do with us, telling the messengers that they would be shot if they came back again."

This was, however, not the real reason for breaking off negotiations. It was true that the two avengers, on learning that large bodies of troops were coming up, had made up their minds to make peace and so save their skins before it was too late, but it was due to Queen Ashantuah intervening at the last moment. "No, no, I won't have it," she is reported to have said. "You must destroy the soldiers coming up from the coast; if you won't I will!"

At that time in the rebel war camp where this conversation

took place, a young Ashanti was present. He had before the rising been a constant attendant at the missionary meetings in Kumasi. The gospel of Christianity had strongly appealed to him. He felt that the Ashanti religion of human sacrifice was not the true one. If the rebellion succeeded, it not only meant the continuance of human sacrifice, but the wholesale slaughter of those fellow Christians whose common sympathy he shared. In that war camp he kept his ears open. He learnt of Queen Ashantuah's plan to destroy the troops coming up from the coast. His impulse was to save them. That night, May 16th, he left the war camp and walked to Pekki, eight miles away in Beckwai country, to confide in a fellow sympathizer there with a view to the information being taken to the Rev. Father at Beckwai so that he could warn the coming troops of their danger. On my arrival at Beckwai on May 23rd at the interview that day with my native missionary friend, I not only received this information and acted on it but retained and have still in my possession the actual note which the young Ashanti brought with him from Pekki. This is it:

Pekyi,
May 17, 1900.

DEAR MR. JONES,

I have sent this young man named Yao Beng to come to you please dear father to let me hear some information about the comming soldiers and their capn.

He will also inform you how the enemies determed to do against the B. troops when they passed the main road from Asuminya to Kumasi.

Major Morris took over the command of the troops in Kumasi. Five days later, on May 20th, he launched his big offensive against the rebels. It was a simultaneous attack on two stockades with a view to capturing them and securing a supply of food from the plantations in their vicinity. A preliminary bombardment of one hour's duration with four 7-pounder guns was carried out on the war camp supporting these stockades. A simultaneous attack on the two stockades was then launched. Both attempts, however, failed, retirements had to be made, the attempt given up, and a considerable

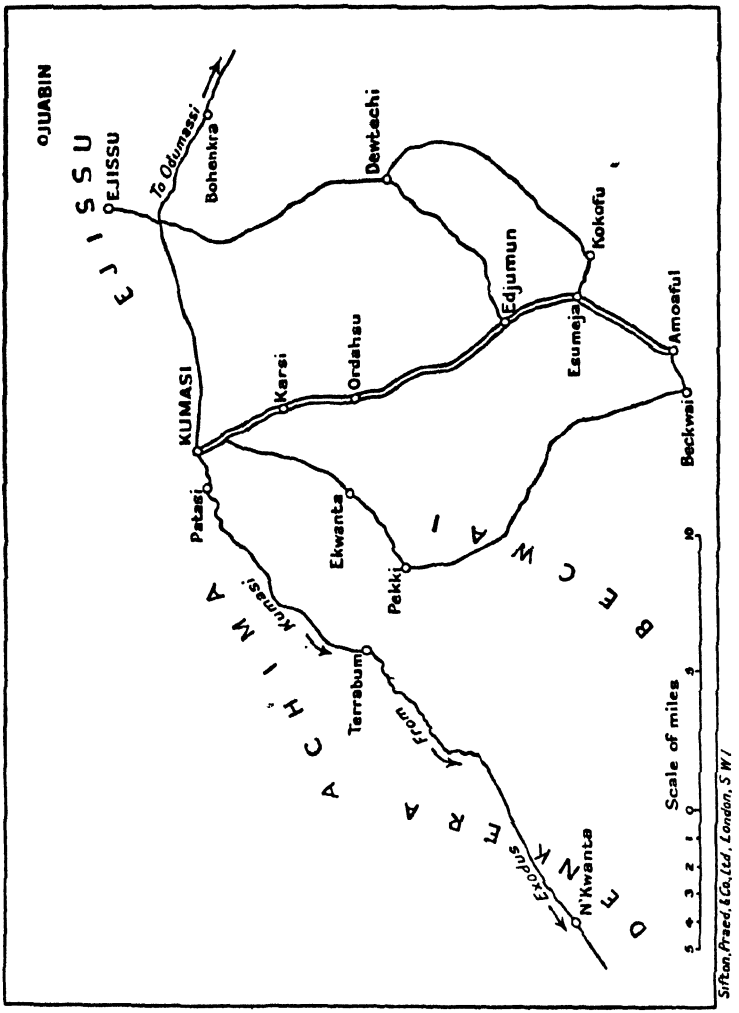
amount of ammunition had been expended, which could be ill afforded in view of a possible withdrawal from Kumasi.

Outside Kumasi preparations were being made for the Ashantis to move southward to Kokofu and Edjumun to deal with the advancing British troops, and on May 24th the great coup of Queen Ashantuah was launched on my command. From then onwards news reached Kumasi that troops were advancing to its relief, and so persistent were these rumours that it is on record that Major Morris, still suffering from his wound, left the Fort in a go-cart to inspect the Basel Mission buildings in order to see what accommodation there was for the quartering of officers and men of the relieving force.

It was no doubt due to these rumours that the decision was taken to postpone the promised attempt to break through to Prahsu. On June 4th, so convincing were these rumours, that the Governor, in a letter to the Colonial Secretary, Accra, dated Kumasi, June 4th, wrote: "It is rumoured that a Relief Column is on its way here, but I am unable to give you the reasons why it is imperative that they should arrive within the next few days for fear of this minute falling into the hands of the rebels."

On the same day the Governor despatched by another messenger a second letter addressed to the Officer Commanding the troops advancing on Kumasi, pointing out the position and stating that if not relieved by June 11th they must break out.

On the morning of June 11th at Esumeja I sent back my reply by the Governor's messenger. The messenger failed to get the message or himself into Kumasi, but was able to pass in from mouth to mouth his own information, which not only succeeded in postponing the exodus but enabled the exodus to take the route planned for it at Esumeja. The credit for taking this route has to this day been given to Kwatchie N'Ketia, the chief of N'Kwanta, who was in Kumasi. It is true that he furnished the guide, and that it was to his own town, N'Kwanta, two days' march from Kumasi and the most direct route to the Denkera country, but the information on which he acted was that furnished by the Governor's mes-


OJUABIN
EJISSU
EJISSU
To Odumasi
Bohenkra
Dewtachi
KUMASI
Karsi
Ordahau
Edjumun
Kokofu
Esumeja
Amoaful
Patasi
Ekwanta
Pekki
Backwai
ASHANTI
Kumasi
Terrabum
From Prestea
N'Kwanta
ENCHEMIRA
Scale of miles
0 1 2 3 4 5 10
Sifton, Praed, & Co., Ltd., London, S.W.1

senger, a carrier as the Governor called him in his letter. It is clear that some of this information reached the Governor's ears, for the Acting Resident writes in his book:*

"On the 12th, 13th, and 14th of June news was brought by levies and refugees which left no room for doubt as to the whereabouts of the Relief Column. Its advance guard was, we were informed, at Ordahsu, where it had halted in order to let the men rest, and let the carriers bring up supplies before the final advance was made on Kumasi."

The so-called advance guard was the native scouts pushed forward towards Ordahsu, to watch for signs of any exodus and which the Governor's messenger saw leave Esumeja before he started for Kumasi on June 11th.

The Acting Resident further writes with reference to the discussions held on June 14th and 15th between the Governor, Major Morris, and himself on the possibilities of the various routes for the exodus:

"Curiously enough while the merits of this route were being discussed, Kwatchie N'Ketia, the old chief of N'Kwanta, came to me attended only by his confidential servants and told me that if we contemplated breaking through the rebel lines, the one and only way was to take the Patasi–Terrabum N'Kwanta road, across which only one stockade had been erected between the swamp and Patasi village, when we could go either to Beckwai or to his village of N'Kwanta where we should be safe. He said that his people knew the road well and that he could supply guides.

"After having listened to all he had to say, I told him that while the advice of a man of his age and experience was always good, there was no likelihood of our having to leave Kumasi, seeing that the Relief Column was daily expected."

There is in West Africa an old maxim, "A willing guide means everything, an unwilling one beware!"

This Patasi–N'Kwanta road was decided on and was not to be disclosed till the exodus actually took place. The Governor and Major Morris had up to then been in favour of making

* *The Ashanti Campaign 1900.*

the exodus by the N'Koranza road which led to the Northern Territories.

On the 17th of June an incident occurred in Kumasi which might have altered the whole course of events. It can best be described in the Acting Resident's own words.

"Asibi, the King of Kokofu, who, it will be remembered, had been arrested and detained in the Fort when on the point of leaving Kumasi to join the rebels, made a desperate and almost successful attempt to escape and reach the Mampon road camp.* Although continually watched by a sentry, he succeeded in getting out of the Fort unnoticed, and made his way to an unoccupied shelter, where he was seen crouching by a servant who gave the alarm. Asibi then took to his heels, but was pursued and brought back by some Hausas to the Fort, where he was handcuffed and strictly guarded."

The kings in Kumasi were not slow to realize the meaning of this act. On the same day the Governor wrote and despatched an urgent appeal to the Officer Commanding at Esumeja, saying that they could only remain till Wednesday, the 20th, inclusive: "It is essential that relief should arrive by that day at the latest. Understand if you please that this is our last effort to await your arrival."

That same evening Major Morris issued to the officers and heads of departments in Kumasi copies of the plan of the order of march for the exodus, without disclosing the route to be followed. A small garrison was to be left behind in the Fort and the King of Kokofu taken as a prisoner and closely guarded in the position allotted to him in the column.

The 20th of June came. No reply, no Relief Force. Not a written message had entered Kumasi since April 29th. The loyal kings discussed the situation. They realized there was something up at Kokofu and evidently Queen Ashantuah was getting the better of it. It was time they cleared out of Ashanti

* Spies undoubtedly gave the King of Kokofu the startling news of the retirement from Kwisa on June 14th, of the bolting of the British miners and carriers from Obuassi the same day, of the retrograde movement from Esumeja on June 16th, and of the movement of the last contingent of Achimas to Kokofu, which caused the King to attempt to bolt on June 17th.

and the Governor, too. The officers were puzzled. The advance guard of the Relief Force had been reported at Ordahsu a week ago and the main body at Esumeja. They must have moved somewhere by now. This attempt of the King of Kokofu to bolt must have something to do with it. They knew this king was going to lead the rebellion; his town of Kokofu was just east of Esumeja. Was it possible that they at Esumeja could not come on? They would find this out. They would send up gun signals, and if they had come up to Ordahsu they must hear the gun-fire.

That night, June 21st, ten rounds of the 7-pounder were fired at extreme elevation in two bursts of five rounds each. No reply was heard. The relieving force could not be at Ordahsu.

The Governor decided to wait no longer, and preparations were completed to leave Kumasi at 5 a.m. on the morning of June 23rd, when everybody was in readiness to take the fateful plunge. Lady Hodgson and the missionary ladies stood outside the Fort, pale but composed, ready to enter their hammocks and face the unknown horrors beyond.

The exodus was made in two parts. The first consisted of the Europeans, with their hammocks and personal belongings, the medical units, reserve ammunition, and two days' supply of food, with all the available fighting men consisting of six hundred Gold Coast and Lagos Hausas with two guns and three maxims. The second part consisted of the three thousand civil population and was to follow behind the rearguard of the first part.

It had been calculated that the first part of the exodus would be two miles in length, and as it was known that the Patasi stockade, the first obstacle to be encountered, was about a mile from the Fort the advance guard would be one mile beyond the stockade before the rearguard had left the Fort, when the civil population would follow on in single file, too; so by the time these refugees had got clear of the Fort the first part of the exodus would be many miles ahead. Yet these refugees, without military protection of any kind, as soon as they knew that the Patasi stockade must have been captured by the moving off of the rearguard, did not hesitate

to follow with their belongings on their heads and leave the protection of the Fort.

Would they have done so had they not known of the exact state of affairs outside? From my own experience of natives I emphatically say no. These refugees never flinched, but went steadily on, and, as was only to be expected, their eagerness to push on to avoid being caught up by the Ashantis, who they knew to be at Karsi, would make it difficult for the rearguard to keep them back. As a matter of fact, some of these refugees, exhausted and worn out, fell by the roadside and either died or were captured by the Ashantis.

The exodus was successful, but what would have been their fate had not the strong Achima contingent, double that at Karsi, guarding this very line of retreat been moved to Kokofu five days previously? One fact emerges beyond dispute, that had my command gone into Kumasi, setting free Queen Ashantuah and the Ashanti army at Kokofu, there would not have been a survivor of the exodus to tell the tale.

Yet never was there a more brilliant example of courage and devotion than that displayed by this gallant band of heroes in coming out as they did. The Europeans and native soldiers had made up their minds to sell their lives dearly for the honour of England, and as the only way to keep the British flag flying in Kumasi. Few know what it means to enter an enormous jungle forest and continue along a narrow path in single file with the branches of trees almost touching one, well knowing that within a few yards on either side may be hidden thousands and thousands of Ashantis all thirsting for one's blood. Yet they did it and all honour to them.

The exodus began with the moving off of the advance guard, consisting of one hundred and fourteen Hausas with Captain Leggett and two native officers and under command of Captain Armitage, who was accompanied by the promised guide. Then followed the gun and maxim detachments, then fifty Hausas under Mr. Berthon with medical unit and hammocks under Dr. Graham, then another fifty Hausas. Major Morris, D.S.O., in command, with Dr. Garland and Captain Marshall, with their hammocks, medical stores, etc., followed,

supported by twenty-five Hausas under Captain Digan. Then came His Excellency and Lady Hodgson in their hammocks, accompanied by Dr. Chalmers with his hammock, each having the usual number of eight hammock men. Then followed a detachment of one hundred and ten Hausas under Captain Parmeter.

The next lot were about to move forward when the men in front suddenly halted. The head of the column had come in sight of the stockade. Here is Captain Armitage's own account of its capture.

"A turn in the path brought us in front of the Patasi stockade which belched fire and slugs along its length, while a yell of defiance told us that the rebels were quite prepared for us. We charged up the path, only to be driven back, the guide wounded in the right arm, Captain Leggett hit by a slug (which neither of us thought had penetrated) in the abdomen, and several Hausas wounded. I instructed Leggett to fire volleys at the stockade, and taking twenty men with me, entered the bush on our right flank, and making a wide detour, crept towards the left flank of the rebels.

"I found that after a time we could not advance, as the fire of the Hausas on the road was not only directed on the stockade, but in our direction also. The men lay down, and leaving them in charge of a non-commissioned officer, I got back on to the road, and after giving strict orders that no man was to fire into the bush, returned with Captain Leggett and more men. We soon got behind the stockade, which our fire enfiladed, while I sent back my orderly to tell Sergeant Fulani, who was in charge of the Hausas firing on the stockade, to cease fire. As soon as this was done, we rose, and with the Hausas, who called upon 'Allah,' and were answered by the rebels' war-cry, charged into the clearing behind the stockade."

The stockade captured, an opening was made in it to permit the passage of the column, while the Hausas were sent forward to clear the path for the further advance, and it was here that Captain Marshall, who had come up to take Captain Leggett's place, was himself severely wounded. These operations occupied a considerable time and those halted in the rear and waiting to start from the Fort were kept in an agonizing state of suspense.

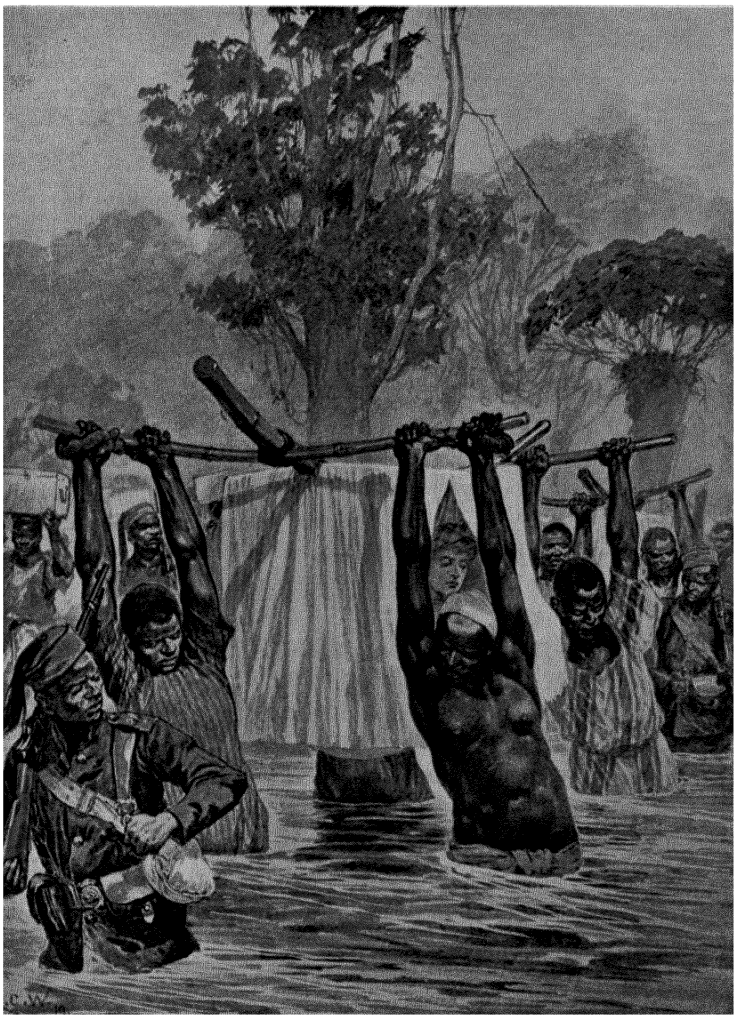
To the ladies sitting in their hammocks the ordeal was one that should live in history. They knew only too well what the failure to take this stockade would mean. They had seen with their own eyes during the siege failure after failure to take even a single stockade. Was this to be another? They knew every minute's delay lessened their chance of escape, for the sound of the firing must have been heard and the blowing of horns and beating of war drums meant only too clearly the calling up of the hordes of Ashantis which they believed were waiting and thirsting for their blood. They never faltered, and one can well imagine with what feelings of relief and gratitude they found themselves passing along mile after mile to safety, the gallant advance guard clearing out the hostile villagers through whose villages the exodus, during the first day's march, had to pass. It was a glorious achievement and I have been told, as an illustration of the courage of the ladies, that Lady Hodgson herself, when in the vicinity of Kumasi, could not understand why these Ashanti hordes, which they believed to be outside, had not attacked and destroyed them, especially the refugees following behind the rearguard. All honour to these ladies in helping to keep the flag flying in Kumasi.

The exodus, on the third day, reached N'Kwanta in friendly Denkera country, where they were warmly welcomed. At N'Kwanta His Excellency the Governor despatched to the Secretary of State for the Colonies in London the following telegraphic despatch.

N'Kwanta,

June 26, 1900.

Have the honour to inform you that in consequence of column for relief not arriving, and reduction of food supplies to three days and a half, it was necessary to make an attempt to push through rebel forces. Taking two days' supply of rations, and leaving remainder for force of one hundred left to guard the fort under Assistant-Inspectors Bishop and Ralph sufficient for twenty-four days, the column, six hundred strong, left Kumasi at 5.45 a.m., June 23rd, under the command of Major Morris, D.S.O., accompanied by seven hundred carriers, loyal Kings of Mampon, Juabin, Aguna, N'Kwanta,



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The Exodus

and Nsuta, with their followers and all Europeans, inclusive of members of Basel Mission.

I was able to remain at Kumasi till the 23rd of June only by reduction of supply of rations to a minimum. The force was too weak to attempt to break out by the Prahsu road, where the rebel forces were in great numbers, but it was given out that I should take that road, and the rebel forces, hearing this, fortunately remained to await arrival.

The route decided on after full consideration was that through Patasi and Terrabum to N'Kwanta. At Patasi there was a stockade which was captured by a flank movement with loss of one killed and several wounded, including Captains Marshall and Leggett, both severely wounded. At every village passed through the advance guard was attacked and the rearguard harassed, but Terrabum was reached with loss of only six killed and several slightly wounded. Many of the carriers, weakened by hunger, threw away their loads, and nearly all of us have lost clothing and such provisions as we had.

The march to N'Kwanta has been one of great difficulty and privation, the hammock-men being too weak to perform duty, and the column hampered with large numbers of persons who followed from Kumasi. We are halting here for two days to recruit, and we hope to reach Cape Coast in ten days' time. We have had letters sent to officer commanding column for relief, who, from what I hear, has reached Beckwai, acquainting him with situation, and saying that it is absolutely necessary to relieve fort not later than July 15th. The people encamped round the fort suffered from starvation terribly, and the rate of mortality was at the last upwards of thirty per diem. The scenes witnessed were terrible.

I could not attack the rebel forces with any determination owing to insufficient ammunition, and we marched out of Kumasi on June 23rd with only one hundred and fifty rounds of ammunition per man. Major Morris arrived at Kumasi with two hundred and thirty Hausas on the 15th of May. His services in these anxious and trying times have been invaluable to me; I cannot speak too highly of the way in which he carried out arrangements for leaving Kumasi. I have had no news of any kind since the 29th of April, when the Lagos Constabulary reached Kumasi. Regret to inform you that Middlemist, Deputy Inspector-General, died of malarious fever May 6th, and Maguire, Assistant Inspector of Constabulary, killed in action May 29th.

HODGSON.

Sir Frederick and Lady Hodgson received many congratulatory telegrams on their escape. To Mr. Alfred L. Jones, the Liverpool shipowner, Sir Frederick wrote on July 29, 1900.

"We were rather dismayed at not being relieved, and as our food supply came to an end we had no alternative but to make the attempt to break through the rebel lines.

"I don't think any of us expected to be successful, as the troops were so weakened, but by the mercy of God we succeeded."

Sir Frederick also threw light on the origin of the rebellion, writing in the same letter: "The rebellion was well planned and prearranged; the Golden Stool was only an incident. The pity of it was that I was not advised of the state of things, and walked quietly into the place as if everybody was loyal to the backbone."

The King of Kokofu was safely brought out with the column, taken to Accra, and there shipped to Sierra Leone to join King Prempeh, both shortly afterwards being removed to the Seychelles for greater security.

The sound of firing had died down in Kumasi. The rearguard had begun to move, the refugees had taken up their chattels on their heads and moved slowly into formation to follow behind the rearguard. Captain Bishop, Lieutenant Ralph, and Dr. Hay watched the serpent-like humanity fading away over the swamp into the jungle beyond. The officers glanced at each other in silence. It was broken by Captain Bishop's cheery remark:

"Buck up, you fellows; we are to be relieved within five days. You will have the Relief Force here by June 28th, at the latest. I was given the assurance this morning that authentic information had been received that the relief force was at Esumeja, and that we should be relieved in five days at the very latest. I promise you it is the absolute truth."

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

"Kokofu"

"It is true, sir! They are out! It is official!"

"Thank God!" I exclaimed, and took the piece of paper that Captain Haslewood held out to me.

I saw at once that there was still a garrison in Kumasi and that the exodus had left there on June 23rd, and were on their way to Denkera. I realized, too, that the Governor's messenger must have brought this about, it being what I had planned for, and even more interesting that we had actually heard the departure of the exodus from Kumasi in the firing reported by my scouts on the morning of June 23rd. It was indeed a fitting reward for the exertion and privations of my little command, but their work was far from over, for the garrison in Kumasi had still to be relieved, and this time we must go to Kumasi to do it.

Alas, poor Wilson was no longer with us. We had received the notification from Fumsu that the remnants of E Company had reached that place. There had been a great fight at Dompuassi where Captain Wilson had been killed. Colour-Sergeant Humphries had brought into Fumsu Staff-Sergeant Payne, wounded, and the body of Captain Wilson, which was buried with military honours.

The task before us at Esumeja was becoming daily more difficult and dangerous because of the non-arrival of the rest of the Ashanti Field Force. We could not hope to go on bluffing Queen Ashantuah much longer. For over a fortnight, up to July 2nd, Major Wilkinson and I had to deal with a most delicate situation. My task was to hold Esumeja against a threatened attack from Kokofu while his was to strengthen us and carry out an order of Colonel Willcocks to support the

forward movement from Kwisa of Colonel Burroughs's command. This would entail another retrograde movement to carry the order out, which I considered would have been fatal in its results. I did my very utmost to oppose it in letters to Major Wilkinson, my last dated June 29th pointed out:

"I would again respectfully draw your attention against a retrograde movement in any strength from Beckwai; the King's minor chiefs are well aware of the state of affairs and may at this stage turn over to the rebels. I add this from conversations I have had with natives, and also that information of any moves are made known to the rebels."*

It was with feelings of very great relief that I learned that Major Wilkinson had appreciated the position and did not carry out this movement to Esan Kwanta.

It was on July 2nd that the respite came. It was a shout. I looked round and saw the head of the native Intelligence approaching.

"Sir, they are coming! Fine soldiers this time, they have knocked the Adansi army into a cocked hat. Real soldiers, too; they arrived at Beckwai early this morning."

This was soon followed by my orderly announcing the approach of a party from Beckwai. I went out to meet it. I saw a well-groomed officer and some smart-looking N.C.O.s. I recognized these Regulars. The officer was Captain P. A. Charrier (Royal Munster Fusiliers), Adjutant and Staff Officer to Colonel Burroughs. He had come in to inform me that Kokofu was to be attacked next day, July 3rd, as this menace to any forward advance could no longer be tolerated. He was to act as Chief Staff Officer and had come in with his N.C.O.s to see things for himself. A few minutes' conversation with him showed that he had a thorough grasp of the whole situation. We started on a round of the outposts. He paid particular attention to the path to Kokofu. I sent forward the scouts. We soon drew the Ashanti signal guns and a boom of slugs. Captain Charrier was satisfied.

* "Lieutenant-Colonel Burroughs's column reached Beckwai July 2nd, and none too soon as many of the Beckwai chiefs were wavering in their allegiance from fear of the Ashantis."—Official Despatches, *London Gazette*.

"You must have been having a very trying time here, and your action in doing what you did was the only possible way of preventing a terrible tragedy in Kumasi."

I thanked him. We adjourned to the Rest House where Captain Haslewood was awaiting us to discuss the arrangements for next day. Captain Charrier's orders were clear and explicit.

"I shall want you," he began, "to have the Sierra Leone Frontier Police and Lagos Hausas out on outpost duty as usual, the rest of your force to be ready paraded at 8 a.m. with the 75-mm. gun, extra rounds for which we have, and two maxims. On the arrival of Colonel Burroughs's command, consisting of the 1st W.A.R. and the W.A.F.F. under Major Wilkinson, it will take the Kokofu path, the gun and two maxims taking up the interval between the 1st W.A.R. and the W.A.F.F. and the remainder of your command join in the W.A.F.F. under the orders of Major Wilkinson. As soon as the whole force has passed through the outpost the latter are to be drawn in and follow the force as its rearguard under your command. Your medical officer with his staff and hammocks to join the medical staff as it passes through. Have you both got it all now?"

Being answered in the affirmative he rose to leave. I was, however, very disappointed that the men whom I had the honour to command, now that the knock-out blow was about to be delivered and these men had done so much to make it possible, were relegated to the rearguard. Haslewood would be in the thick of it with his maxim gun, but I could well imagine the feelings of Anderson and Edwards.

Punctual to time next morning, the scouts of the 1st W.A.R. were seen approaching, supported by an advance guard of the same unit. They took the Kokofu path. I saluted and shook hands with the officers as they passed, wishing each of them good luck. They passed on and halted on our outpost line at the cross roads where they extended awaiting the final orders to push on to Kokofu. Headquarters with an escort then arrived. I recognized Colonel Burroughs. I saluted him. A handshake, a few cheery remarks, and with my information, "when you reach the burnt village, sir, you will find five hundred yards

ahead along the footpath the enemy's line of defence," they passed on.

The boom of a Dane gun rang out, followed by another. The advance had begun. A never-ending stream of well-set-up men in high spirits was slowly moving forward. They bore in their demeanour the spirit of their recent victory and were inclined to chaff each other at the slowness of the progress. The scouts were doing their work thoroughly, which meant slowness. They left nothing to chance. Shot after shot rang out as the enemy fell back. A stream of cheerful men still continued. An hour had already passed when news came back that the burnt village had been occupied and preparations were about to be commenced for a combined front and flank attack. It was time to fall in the S.L.F.P., and for the Lagos Hausas to move forward and form the rearguard. It soon became evident that a stiff fight was going on. We could hear the heavy firing as the rearguard took up its allotted position just short of the burnt village with our flanking parties well out on both flanks.

Hour after hour passed; there was no diminution of the firing. There seemed to be little progress. Reports came back of heavy opposition and many casualties. I became anxious. I sent forward to ask if we could be of any help. I was told to keep the rearguard intact at all costs. This was ominous. Something was amiss.

I was sent for. It was with much difficulty that I could avoid the wounded stretched on both sides of the path to find my way forward. I saw at once that things were not going well. We had made no progress. Captain Charrier beckoned me.

"We want a brigade at least to do this job. The odds against us are terrible. All our attacks have been repulsed and we are now being outflanked everywhere. We can't go on being mowed down.* The Colonel is wounded, poor Brownlie is killed; you can see for yourself what our casualties are. I don't think there's an officer standing. We must get out of it—quickly, too. The enemy are too much for us. Please bring

* Official despatches record that "the gun and maxims several times literally swept the enemy back into cover but to no avail."

your rearguard up, take over your two maxims and cover our retirement as best you can. It is a terrible order, but it must be done. It is the Colonel's order."

The retirement proved a difficult and trying operation. It could not have been successfully carried out but for the splendid co-operation of Major Wilkinson with the remnants of his command, who were holding both flanks against great odds, while the wounded and the sorely tried W.A.R. were being withdrawn. Fortunately for us the enemy had not yet realized that a retirement was in progress. Had they delivered a concerted counter-attack at this juncture, there would not have been a single survivor to tell the tale. As it was, when the cross-roads were reached, there was a general sigh of relief that a disaster had been averted.

Colonel Burroughs sent for me. He was obviously suffering great pain from his wound.

"Look here, Hall, you must hold Esumeja at all costs. I am leaving a strong detachment of my regiment to strengthen your garrison. If you want more help, send to Beckwai at once where we are returning. Better luck next time. I hope it won't be long before we have another go at them. Reinforcements are coming, we shall want them. This morning's work proved that my task was impossible with the number of troops at my disposal. Good-bye, mind, no retirement."

Saluting and giving the necessary assurance I lost no time in preparing to meet the attack. I knew that it must come. Queen Ashantuah wouldn't miss this chance. She would attack us as soon as the troops were back in Beckwai. Her men were no doubt watching them at that moment. I was thankful that I had a strong garrison. She would find us prepared.

So it proved. At 5 p.m. a most determined attack was launched. Haslewood with his maxim was in continuous action. As fast as the Ashantis tried to cross the open vistas they were mown down, to be replaced and renewed by others. They gave up the attempt there, contenting themselves with running forward to fire their Dane guns at quite an ineffective range, and retiring to load them again. But in other sections the Ashantis were more successful. They had succeeded in driving

our men into the inner line of defence, that is to say, to our line of trenches concealed behind cotton-trees lying on the ground with a more or less open clearing of some fifty yards from the fringe of the village. Do what they could the Ashantis failed to cross it. As fast as they appeared in the open they were shot down by our men under perfect cover. How I blessed those cotton-trees and our invisible defences.

A cry suddenly went up: "They're making for the village." Luckily our last reserve was posted nearby and without a moment's hesitation attacked and drove back quite a formidable party of Ashantis who had succeeded in forcing a passage near our water supply. The Ashantis continued to maintain their pressure on the Kokofu, or eastern, side of Esumeja, and unknown to us had succeeded in crossing to the west side and were preparing to reach the hilltop from that quarter. It was a spectacular sight, but had no chance against the maxim and rifle-fire belching forth from the hilltop. It brought home to me the true meaning of the Ashanti war song:

"If I go forward I die
If I go backward I die
Better go forward and die."

Dusk was fast falling, there was practically a continuous burst of firing from Dane guns all round the outer fringe of Esumeja. It was a never-to-be-forgotten sight in the coming darkness. The firing died down. We are quits now, Queen Ashantuah! You have the initiative. We mean to regain it to-morrow even if I have to call upon every officer and man at Beckwai. We must counteract the effect on the Beckwais and the other tribes of to-day's reverse. Nothing less than Queen Ashantuah on the defensive again at Kokofu will do.

The night was a trying and watchful one. An hour before dawn found everybody on the alert. There was silence and suspense everywhere. As dawn approached feelers were moved forward. They signalled all clear. We pushed forward. The undergrowth was trampled down and blood stains everywhere, testifying that the enemy had suffered heavily and had removed their dead and wounded. We reached the crosspaths and were

in our old positions once more. What did it all mean? We waited for an hour. Nothing happened. Had Queen Ashantuah had enough of it? I decided to send forward a strong patrol. Ah! a Dane gun! that's the signal right enough to give them warning that we are coming. The patrol pressed on. Other signal guns boomed out. The burnt village was reached with the report that the enemy were in position on their original defensive lines. This was indeed good news. Queen Ashantuah was once more frightened of us. We had regained the initiative. The patrol was withdrawn, the outpost line re-established, and everywhere a sigh of relief that the worst was over.

I sent for the native head of the Intelligence Service and told him to send out to the Beckwai villages his assistants, and he himself to go to the King of Beckwai with the information that Queen Ashantuah did not run away yesterday when we hit her, neither did we run away from Esumeja when she hit us back. We are therefore quits. She does not like it and is frightened. Tell everybody she will have to run away very soon. More soldiers are coming up and they mean to do it next time.

"Yes, sah, I quite understand."

By noon the villagers were bringing in their produce to the market. It was doing a roaring trade with our increased garrison and the Ashanti army being comfortably settled down again in their five war camps at Kokofu. I sent out scouts once more.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

Colonel Willcocks visits Esumeja

ON July 7th an arrival from Beckwai brought us exciting news. It was that Colonel Willcocks had left Prahsu at last. On July 8th we were informed that Lieutenant-Colonel Burroughs with part of his regiment had moved from Beckwai to Esan Kwanta, in order to co-operate with Colonel Willcocks's advance from Kwisa. On July 9th we received news of the arrival at Beckwai that day of both commands, after a junction had been effected at Dompuassi and no opposition of any kind met with. Colonel Willcocks had brought with him to Beckwai, in addition to the West African Regiment, troops belonging to 1st and 2nd W.A.F.F. numbering four hundred and fifty men, three maxims, and two guns. There were also three hundred men of the W.A.F.F. with two maxims and two 75-mm. guns following up a day's march behind.

The reason for this spontaneous and rapid advance was the news that the garrison left in the Fort at Kumasi had been rationed only up to July 15th, and that Colonel Willcocks had telegraphed to England the assurance that the garrison would be relieved by that date.

News was also forthcoming that a large number of special service officers were on their way from England and South Africa, several of whom had landed on the Gold Coast and were approaching Beckwai. Two other regiments, the 1st and 2nd Central African Regiments, and a detachment of Sikhs of the Indian Army were on their way to Cape Coast Castle.

On the afternoon of July 10th my attention was drawn to a patrol coming along the main path from the direction of Kumasi. As they approached someone called out: "An Ashanti

prisoner!" He was being marched in single file between two of our men, and I noticed he was keeping correct step with the men. They halted in front of the Rest House, and I again noticed that the Ashanti prisoner fronted with the escort in correct military style. On approaching, the N.C.O. stated that the man, a soldier from Kumasi, wished to report himself with a message. The man thereupon took out a piece of paper from his loin cloth and handed it to me. It ran: "From Officer Commanding Kumasi to Officer Commanding 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."

"You got out of Kumasi last night?" I asked.

The man nodded and made an eloquent appeal to save them. They were starving and dying off rapidly; they could not last much longer.

I decided that Colonel Willcocks must have this message at once, and the soldier, too.

I handed the message back to the man, congratulated him on his very gallant act, and asked if after some food and a rest he felt equal to going on to Beckwai to hand this message personally to Colonel Willcocks, who I knew would be very, very pleased with him and I hoped well reward him. He expressed his willingness to do so, and while resting and eating he explained that after leaving the Fort at Kumasi he succeeded in avoiding one of the stockades and its detachment, and that keeping clear of Karsi, where he knew the Ashantis were, he came straight down the main path until he met one of our patrols.

It did not take long for the men not on duty to learn of a comrade having got out of Kumasi. They clustered round him to hear his story, and after being placed in a hammock, accompanied by two soldiers told off for the duty, the party moved off on their way to Beckwai.

Left to my own thoughts I reflected that the message addressed to the Officer Commanding Troops Esumeja, confirmed to the hilt the statement of the various messengers,

who had from time to time broken out of Kumasi, that our presence at Esumeja was known to those in Kumasi. It further gave me the clue that the Governor's messenger had evidently got back with my reply, and that he was the means of the Governor getting out of Kumasi in the manner we had planned. I was not surprised to learn that the Ashantis had made no attempt to capture the Fort held by that brave little garrison, now in the last stages of exhaustion. The old she-devil, Queen Ashantuah, played her game well. For weeks past she had deliberately left the road open as far as Karsi to tempt me on to Kumasi. Now she held Karsi with about a thousand Ashantis to make a fight and require the whole of my small command. She had left the little garrison in Kumasi alone to act as a decoy. She knew we must go there to save them and then she would have the Beckwais and everybody else flocking to her standard.

No, Queen Ashantuah, I thought, we will see that Colonel Willcocks does not oblige you. I hope he will allow me to take my command straight to Kumasi with food and help for the little garrison, and he can follow up after he has smashed you up and scattered you to the four winds. Is he strong enough to do that? To-morrow we shall know everything, for as soon as he gets the message from Captain Bishop he will be sure to turn up to decide what to do.

Colonel Willcocks did so. It was next day, July 11th, that he with some of his staff arrived, with a large number of unloaded carriers and pioneers, carrying machetes and axes under Captain Neal, and escorted by two companies under Captain Carlton.

The column halted in the village; the men fell out and there was a movement towards our little market which was then in full swing. A group of officers remained standing. They were looking round with an expression of astonishment on their faces. Colonel Willcocks broke the silence:

"I never saw a more peaceful spot in my life. So this is what you have been holding for the last seven weeks. And where is Kokofu?"

"Just where you are looking, sir, along that path. By gun-fire it is 2,720 yards away and by path a little longer."

Colonel Willcocks and I started for a tour of inspection.

"I have only four days left to relieve Kumasi," he said, "and about a thousand troops to do it with; I want you to give me as much information as you possibly can, Hall."

I realized at once that with so few the best plan was the flank march to Kumasi, via Pekki. We stopped to inspect the 75-mm. gun.

"This, sir," I said, "has done useful work. Mr. Dahne with his instruments has been invaluable in laying the direction of Kokofu for us, and giving us the exact range. He assures me that the 75-mm. gun can be got to Kumasi via Pekki, in case you should decide to carry out the plan I had placed before you in my letter of June 9th, and he would give you all the information you want about the route, as he has already traversed it."

We passed on to other posts, and whenever an officer was introduced Colonel Willcocks always had a cheery word for him. Every now and then he would stop and ply me with questions. I could see his mind was working on the question whether to smash Queen Ashantuah or make the flank march. He could not get over the main road to Kumasi, being open as far as Karsi, and he threw many cursory glances towards Kokofu. He asked about the men. "What about the Sierra Leone Frontier Police?" I assured him that they were splendid fellows and had done excellent work. They were born scouts, and Lieutenant Edwards was as keen as mustard and did not know what fear was.

We had worked round to the Kokofu path. Colonel Willcocks glanced back to the village. He stood watching it for some minutes.

"Why have you not enclosed the place with a palisade? It looks so exposed."

The reason for all these carriers with their machetes and axes being here flashed upon me. Esumeja was to have a palisade and Colonel Willcocks had come to do it. He had evidently heard that I would not have one. I would tell him the reason.

"I agree, sir, but I doubt if you would be here to-day had I done so. You see I have been dealing with a woman since

May 22nd. In the eyes of the Beckwais and other tribes it has become a life and death struggle between us. Had we enclosed ourselves with a palisaded enclosure, she would have proclaimed that we were afraid of her and had shut ourselves in, with the inevitable result that we should have been treated in the same way as Kumasi, besieged and stockaded. As it is, the shoe is on the other foot. She is frightened of us, we have retained the initiative. We were able to save the Ashanti Goldfields and strengthen the garrison at Kwisa at a most critical period; we were able to cover the forward movement of your advance column; we were able, single-handed for a whole month, to prevent Beckwai being invaded, and as you are well aware we have played no small part in drawing the Ashantis away from around Kumasi and covering the Governor's withdrawal. Since May 23rd we have had the leader of the rebellion, Queen Ashantuah, with her war chiefs and ever-increasing army for all practical purposes under lock and key at Kokofu."

Colonel Willcocks reply was short and to the point.

"It will suit my plans best to have a palisaded enclosure. I have brought the men to do it and I will have them put on at once as I want to get the work done before I leave. Will you please have your men off duty put on the job, too."

The fall-in was sounded and every available man was put on this work. A trench was dug round Esumeja and the palisade soon began to make its appearance, the materials being cut from either side of the Kokofu path.

Luncheon interval came when the officers with their chop boxes adjourned to the Rest House.

After chop Colonel Willcocks sprang another surprise on me.

"I shall want," he began, "to take the Sierra Leone Frontier Police back with me. Please arrange with Captain Carlton to relieve these men on duty along the Kokofu path and to see that all working parties are properly protected against any surprise attack.

"I shall also want," he went on, "you and Captain Haslewood to come back to Beckwai, too, and bring E Company's

maxim with details not belonging to the Lagos Hausas or 3rd W.A.F.F."

I went off to have the orders carried out and told Captain Anderson that he would be in command at Esumeja. I left him speculating what was up now.

By teatime the two ends of the palisade assumed almost a complete appearance, with loop holes, entrance, etc., and to achieve this an area of some fifty yards on both sides of the Kokofu path and to a depth along the path of about one hundred yards had been completely cleared.

With the departure of Colonel Willcocks and his command Captain Haslewood and I lost no time in packing up and getting off. We left Captain Anderson issuing his first orders. Here they are, taken from the Esumeja order book.

Force Orders by Captain G. Anderson, Commanding the Esumeja Garrison.

Esumeja,
July 11, 1900.

1. Duties. Orderly Officer Captain Shortland, 3rd W.A.F.F. Guards.
   The O.C. 3rd W.A.F.F. will arrange to find the requisite guards and sentries for the village.
   The O.C. Lagos Hausa Force will arrange to find the requisite guards and sentries for the Rest House.
2. Alarm. On the assembly sounding the whole of the troops will at once proceed to their posts within the stockade which encloses the Rest House and finishes at the road to the well. The 3rd W.A.F.F. will line the southern and western faces of the stockade. The Lagos Hausa Force the northern and eastern faces.
   The native inhabitants of Esumeja village will remain therein at their own risk and the chief will be so informed.
3. Fatigues. Fatigues to-morrow as under:

Soldiers: 8 a.m. to 11 a.m.	Carriers: 6 a.m. to 12 noon.
2 p.m. to 4 p.m.	2 p.m. to 5 p.m.

Half the carriers will fetch sticks for the stockade; the remainder both soldiers and carriers will remain for work in camp which will be explained to-morrow.

Parade. Troops will stand to their arms from 4 a.m. till daylight at their posts as detailed in Det. Order No. 2 of this date.

5. Returns. O.C.s detachments will furnish by 10 a.m. to-morrow a return showing the strength of their detachments (by ranks).
The Medical Officer will furnish a return showing the numbers of the various corps left in hospital.

(By order) L. McKINNON, Lieutenant,
Acting Adjutant Esumeja Garrison.

Troops will stand to their arms within the stockade. Good heavens, I thought, where would Beckwai and the Governor have been by now had such a stockade been in existence. I can picture the alarm sounding, Ashantis moving about in the dense jungle around us, a cry: "We are surrounded, every man must fight to the last," and in reality the greater part of the Ashantis off to Beckwai, raising the standard of revolt there and up to Kumasi, making the Governor's escape impossible. We could not have lasted more than forty-eight hours inside this stockade as our water supply was eight hundred yards away, and this fact was well known to Queen Ashantuah, and it was there that some of our heaviest fighting took place.

Bidding the officers au revoir and thanking them for their loyal help, Captain Haslewood and I with the maxim gun and other details, including my native Intelligence, started off for Beckwai.

"Well, Haslewood," I said, "we shall no longer be working together. I gather Colonel Willcocks is taking you on as his A.D.C. and I have not the slightest idea what I am in for; I hope to take over my old company, as none of the special service officers would be able to understand the Nupes. I expect you are wondering what Colonel Willcocks's plan of action will be; so am I. He has not let me into the secret, but it seems perfectly obvious that he intends attacking Kokofu. He could not possibly leave Queen Ashantuah there with Esumeja reduced in strength and shut up. We have even taken their two maxims away. Why, Queen Ashantuah would be free to roam anywhere. No, the attack is coming all right, I hope you and I will have a good look in."

"No failure this time, Hall."

I agreed. "Colonel Willcocks has made one good move to-day to help his attack on Kokofu. The palisade had to be built

some time or other for the line of communications to Kumasi, but by building it now Queen Ashantuah will be put off her guard. To-morrow she will be clapping her hands with delight, saying that the White Colonel cannot wait any longer and is going to Kumasi either by the Pekki or Esumeja path, and she does not mind which, and is going to leave her alone; otherwise why shut his soldiers in at Esumeja. Her chance is coming at last."

"And what is more," said Haslewood, "she will be telling the thousand Ashantis at Karsi that the Big White Colonel is coming by either route, and to make him blaze off as much ammunition as they can so that they will have nothing left to get out with when Queen Ashantuah follows up."

"I don't think she will follow up, do you?" I said. "What are the words of that old song, 'Oh, what a surprise, two lovely black eyes!' Queen Ashantuah will be singing that as a captive to-morrow."

We both laughed.

In the morning I went to the billets of E Company. They were delighted to see me again. They were like a lot of schoolboys, showing me their wounds and clamouring to be led against the Ashantis again. They told me what a terrible fight it was at Dompuassi. When poor Captain Wilson was killed they guarded the body, carried in a hammock with fixed bayonets all the way to Fumsu, and several desperate attempts were made by the enemy to capture it. The men were now longing to settle accounts with the enemy and I assured them that the opportunity would come soon.

I started on my way back to my quarters. When near the King's palace I was accosted by Mr. Jones, my native missionary friend.

"The King would like to have a word with you."

The King was all smiles. Mr. Jones explained that Colonel Willcocks had led the King to believe that he was going to smash Queen Ashantuah next day. Was I going, too, and what were we going to do with Queen Ashantuah?

"Deport her, King; that will make you happy, won't it?" And with smiles and handshakes from both of us I went on my way.

There was no longer any doubt, Haslewood and I had guessed right; it was to be an attack on Kokofu. The building of that stockade at Esumeja ought to do the trick; it would indeed come as a shock to Queen Ashantuah, but for all that she would certainly put up a good fight and might even hold us again. In any case there was an element of gamble. Personally I should have chosen the flank march plan as the more certain of the two of being in time to save Kumasi; however, the stockade at Esumeja had been built and that settled the matter.

It was not long before I was informed that Colonel Willcocks would like to see me at his quarters. As I entered his hut and saluted he motioned me to a seat. Colonel Willcocks then told me of his plans, which I was on no account to divulge.

"I have called you into Beckwai," he began, "to take on a very responsible task. You know as well as I do how nervous the King is of Kokofu. He has been pressing me all the time to attack and destroy that place. I have to humour him and have spread the report that I am going there. I dare not with the force at my command run the risk of another reverse at Kokofu. I am therefore going via Pekki. When the King gets to know of it, as he must, I am afraid he may bolt and the Beckwais go over. I am therefore asking you to keep him and his people loyal until I return, and with what men I can let you have you must do the best you can."

"May I, sir, ask what these troops are, so that I can take them at once to Esumeja? It is there that Beckwai is best protected and your movement covered."

"No, no, Hall; I know you wanted, if the march via Pekki took place, to strengthen Esumeja, but the few days here have convinced me of the reality of the King of Beckwai's bolting. You must be on the spot here; I should feel happier if you were; you have kept the King and his people loyal so far. You will have under your command, besides the garrison at Esumeja, two companies here, your own and E Company 2nd W.A.F.F."

"I quite understand, sir, but as you wish me to remain at Beckwai, could I suggest that I take my command towards Kokofu to-morrow at the same time or a little earlier than

your command moves off to Pekki, as a feint attack on Kokofu. It may pacify the King for the time being, and unless the enemy attempt to leave Kokofu, I shall be able to explain matters to him on my return, and the enemy at Kokofu be mystified as to your real movements."

"That is an idea, Hall. Carry it out, make up your own column, utilize the spare carriers and look in to-night after dinner for a final word."

I went out feeling anything but happy. So this was my job, to hold the Ashanti army at Kokofu, keep the Beckwais loyal and the King from fleeing, with only two very weak companies and a garrison shut up in Esumeja. Here was Queen Ashantuah's opportunity. What a pity that stockade was built, and how were we to get the Old Terror under lock and key once more at Kokofu. That condition was essential if the King of Beckwai was not to flee and the most dangerous of all military operations, a double flank march, was to be carried through.

I went in search of Captain Monck-Mason, the Officer Commanding E Company 2nd W.A.F.F. I informed him that he and his company would be required for the advance guard next morning. We were going to Kokofu. I was going with my company, too; I would let him know the details later on. I next arranged for the carriers.

At 8 p.m. I entered Colonel Willcocks's night quarters. I explained to him the arrangements I had made for the feint on Kokofu and after one or two details had been dealt with, I raised the question of the disparity of strength between those taking part in the movement to Kumasi and those called upon to cover the movement and protect Beckwai, in view of the fact that the Ashanti army was definitely located at Kokofu. Colonel Willcocks agreed; he was very frank.

"You see," he began, "I have pledged my military career that I will personally relieve Kumasi by the 15th. We cannot give up Kumasi, so will have to provide a new garrison, the strength of which I cannot decide until I get there. This means provisions, stores, etc., will have to be carried for this new garrison besides our own requirements for the march there and back. The minimum number of carriers to do this—and it

has been worked out most carefully—is sixteen hundred. You know as well as I do the danger of carriers dropping their loads and bolting. I cannot afford to lose a single load. I should like a soldier for every carrier as my minimum. I cannot leave you at Beckwai with less than two hundred men, so I must risk it with only eleven hundred men. Fortunately, I have sixty-four officers and British N.C.O.s to back me up. We shall only be away five or six days. I ought to cover the twenty miles each way easily in that time.

There was nothing more to be said. We toasted each other in a whisky and sparklet, the first I had tasted for many a long day, and went out to my valise to sleep before an early start next morning, passing on the way the large palisaded enclosure guarded by sentries where the carriers were confined. They were sleeping peacefully under their palm-leaf shelters in the belief that they were going to Kokofu, for this move was the only one allowed to leak out.

July 13th. A day of marching and counter-marching. Everybody was astir early. The first to move off was the advance guard of the Kokofu column, under the command of Captain Monck-Mason. It was no easy matter to marshall and load up the motley crowd of carriers for their respective columns. Those for Kokofu were sent on at once, while the others were strung out in a long single line to sit down by their loads and await orders to move off. To keep up the movement to Kokofu the rearguard for the Kumasi column were sent in the Kokofu direction before halting, and with the rest of my command I left Beckwai, still leaving many in doubt where they were going. We of the Kokofu column made our progress as slow as possible. We adopted various methods of magnifying our strength and the length of our column. On reaching the battlefield of Amoaful we turned northwards along the Kumasi path on our way to Esumeja.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

A Tense Situation

ON our return to Beckwai from the feint on Kokofu, the town presented a deserted appearance. I saw a strange officer approaching. He looked older and senior to myself. We exchanged questions. He was Captain Reeves of the Leinster Regiment, a Special Service officer from England, recovering from a go of fever and let out of hospital that morning. He was a delightful personality.

"Carry on please, I suppose I am in command," was his cheery remark to an unexpected situation.

In one sense I could not shirk the responsibility of my promise to Colonel Willcocks to keep the King and the Beckwais loyal. The King must know that we were back again and Colonel Willcocks's command nearing Pekki. I had better begin at once and let the King know all would be well; at least I should tell him so.

Reaching the main entrance of the palace I was stopped by Mr. Jones with the remark: "You must not see the King; he is terribly upset and I fear for the consequences."

I gathered from him that the King was furious at having been deceived and was never going to trust the White man again. He kept looking at his old Union Jack and muttering something about the White man had deceived him, and it would be most unwise for me to see him, but perhaps he could get him to do so in the morning.

I told Mr. Jones to tell the King to trust me; I had never deserted him and I had no intention of doing so now, and with the assurance that this would be done I went back to my other duties.

It was with some trepidation that I approached the palace next morning. Mr. Jones was there waiting for me. His opening remark was:

"It was a near thing last night; the King would have gone had I not given him your message. He is willing to see you, but you must be prepared to hear that the King has made up his mind to go."

Without waiting for formalities I asked the King to tell mè everything. He did not want any bidding. The old King fairly let himself go.

"You," the King began, "when you came to Beckwai listened to what I told you about Queen Ashantuah at Kokofu. You acted on it. I also told you about the Achimas from north of Pekki coming to Kokofu to join Queen Ashantuah in attacking you at Esumeja. You again acted on it and frightened Queen Ashantuah. When the small White Colonel came to Beckwai with his regiment I warned him about Kokofu. He acted on it, but Queen Ashantuah was too strong for him; she defeated him and she then fought you at Esumeja. Your Big White Colonel then comes to Beckwai. I tell him about Kokofu, too. He says he is going to go there. He goes to Esumeja and when he comes back tells me that he had made ready to fight Queen Ashantuah at Kokofu. The Chief of Esumeja comes to see me. He tells me that the Big White Colonel came to Esumeja and all day made ready to fight Queen Ashantuah, not at Kokofu, but at Esumeja. The White Officer told the Chief that if he wanted to save his women he must take them away from Esumeja. I was very upset at this news and went to see the Big White Colonel. Some other officers saw me and assured me that the Big White Colonel would fight with Queen Ashantuah at Kokofu the very next day, and they hoped that I would watch the soldiers leave Beckwai to go to Kokofu. You saw me just after I had received this assurance. You saw I was all smiles. Well, I let the Big White Colonel have some Beckwai scouts and was feeling so happy that in a few more hours Queen Ashantuah and her army would be no more. Very, very early in the morning, when the soldiers were making ready to start for Kokofu, the Big White Colonel sends for me. I go

there, and he tells me he is going to Pekki and Kumasi. I told him I had been deceived, said no more, and went and shut myself up in the palace to vow vengeance on the White man. I tell you the Big White Colonel is frightened of Queen Ashantuah and has left you to protect me with soldiers shut up at Esumeja."

"No no, King; the White Colonel has gone to save the little garrison of the Fort and will be back to deal with Queen Ashantuah."

"Pardon, sir, the Big White Colonel has gone into the trap Queen Ashantuah laid for him, that is why the Kumassis made no fight with the poor Hausas there. Now Queen Ashantuah can lock him in and I must go. You cannot protect me this time."

"Come, come, King, you trusted me before to save you from Queen Ashantuah; trust me once more. Let Queen Ashantuah, if she can, shut the Big White Colonel up in Kumasi; it will then be once more the same as before. Instead of the Governor it will be the Big White Colonel, and myself with soldiers to protect you. The first time I was at Esumeja, this time I am on the spot with you at Beckwai."

The King shook his head.

"It cannot be done this time. My army are already talking about going over to Queen Ashantuah. You cannot deny what they are saying."

"And what may that be?"

"I have told you everything and I will tell you. The Beckwais know that your Big White Colonel is walking into a trap. They know that your soldiers have shut themselves in at Esumeja. They know that your soldiers are no longer at Kwisa and the Adansis once more in possession. Your soldiers at Obuassi have shut themselves in, too, and at Fumsu they won't move a few yards outside their stockade. That is not making Queen Ashantuah run away from Kokofu as you told every Beckwai that she would. She knows the truth now, that you British are afraid not only of her but of the Adansis, too. The Big White Colonel thinks he can give her the slip. She will know how to act, the Beckwai army will know how to act, and I must go before it is too late. You can no longer give the pro-

tection of the British flag under which I have kept my promise of serving since I accepted it four years ago."

"Do you think, King, that Queen Ashantuah will follow up her army to Kumasi?"

"Certainly not, she will remain at Kokofu to ensure that I am caught and to make sure that if your Big White Colonel did manage to break out of Kumasi, he would never get back to Beckwai."

The King I could see was determined to go. I would make one last effort. I reminded him that when the Governor was shut up in Kumasi we had to wait for the Big White Colonel.

"You trusted me then to protect you and I did so. Now there are three white colonels coming up. One has reached Fumsu, yes Fumsu. Another is about to leave Cape Coast Castle with a new regiment from over the seas, while a third, with another new regiment, is coming fast in a big steamer to Cape Coast Castle. Surely you can trust me this time to protect you?"

The King once more shook his head. He had already been given that information and took it to be another lie to deceive him.

"Not this time, King, it is absolutely true."

The King looked at me searchingly and after a pause said:

"Well, if it is true it will be too late this time."

I knew it would be, too. It was a standstill order from Esumeja to Fumsu until Colonel Willcocks had returned from Kumasi, when he would deal with the Adansis and Kokofu. There was nothing for it but to take on a very great responsibility in a last hope plan. Colonel Morland's command, which would have arrived at Fumsu, must face an Adansi attack, come to Beckwai and set free some of the troops there. Beamish had tackled the Adansis, Wilson had tackled the Adansis, and I was fated once more to be the means of calling upon Colonel Morland to do the same.

"Look here, King, why should it be too late? If you will only back me up, I think I can stop your army from joining Queen Ashantuah and most certainly protect you."

I proceeded to explain the details. He was to put his spies in motion and as soon as the Ashanti fighting men at Kokofu had

started for Kumasi, he was to let me know and I would act. The troops at Beckwai and Esumeja would enter Kokofu. I laboured the point that the King must see if the fighting men at Kokofu went on to Kumasi, which they must do to besiege Colonel Willcocks, Queen Ashantuah must either be captured or would have to run away and my promise to the Beckwais would then have been fulfilled. The King hesitated to reply as if in deep thought. He then pointed out the danger to him from the Adansis.

"Yes, I know, but that is where you can do your part. You remember when I was coming up from Prahsu and the Ashantis had come down to Edjumun, you wrote me a letter appealing for immediate help. I answered that appeal, came up and protected you. I want you to repeat the appeal to Fumsu. Point out that the Big White Colonel has gone to Kumasi and you fear that you will be attacked, and unless help comes quick things will be very bad. Don't forget to mention that Kwisa is evacuated by us and to come via Obuassi. At the same time send another letter to the King of Denkera to come immediately with his army via the Akim River to Obuassi. One thing more; you must let your chiefs know, especially those in the neighbourhood of Pekki, what I have told you. They, too, must see that Queen Ashantuah will have to run away."

I paused to await the King's reply. It came in an expression of sincere desire to co-operate and with a promise that my requests would be complied with. We sealed our mutual plan with a handshake and I departed.

I had indeed let myself in for it. Seniority or no seniority, I was committed to carry out my part. By the time the appeal to Fumsu had been answered four vital days must elapse. These four days would decide the fate of Colonel Willcocks. The King had made it clear that the Ashanti army would follow up Colonel Willcocks and besiege him. It would be impossible for him to blast his way back to Beckwai, stockade after stockade for twenty miles. It could not be done; his gun and carbine ammunition would not suffice. It must be again another withdrawal to the protection of the Fort at Kumasi to await

relief by the forces Colonel Willcocks knew were on their way. It was equally certain that if any attempt was made by the troops at Beckwai and Esumeja to co-operate with Colonel Willcocks by following up the Ashanti army, the Beckwais would go over and with the Adansis make the position hopeless. No, next morning would see my promised plan against Kokofu put into operation. The Ashanti army was bound to start for Kumasi.

In spite, however, of repeated assurances from the King and my own Intelligence, the Ashanti army had not started. It was to be at any moment. We could only wait. We were waiting, too, for signs of the arrival of Colonel Willcocks at Kumasi, our scouts and watchers being out well forward.

In the evening some scouts came in and reported a burst of big-gun firing in the direction of Kumasi. Was it the signal of Colonel Willcocks's arrival or the shelling of a stockade with the two 75-mm. guns and three 7-pounders. Opinions were divided, but when at nightfall signal guns were heard, there was little doubt that Colonel Willcocks had reached Kumasi. A Beckwai messenger was secured who volunteered to take this news to Fumsu.*

Next morning, July 16th, the Ashanti army had not started. We were told they were all ready to move. In vain we waited, and in the afternoon the native head of Intelligence rushed into my quarters exclaiming:

"They are there, they are there! No white man hurt, the stockade blown to pieces, the garrison all right!"

"Are you sure about this?"

"Absolutely, sir. I have it from two different sources from Pekki."

* In the House of Commons on July 17th Mr. Chamberlain, answering a question by Mr. Drage, said: "At noon to-day I received the following telegram from Colonel Stuart, Commandant at the base at Cape Coast: 'Apparently authentic information just received Beckwai that Kumasi gave night signal that it was relieved on July 15th.' That is the day on which Colonel Willcocks expected to be able to carry out the relief. (Cheers.) I can only say that if the news is true, which I believe it is, it reflects great credit on Colonel Willcocks and the forces under his command, who have been fighting under the most terrible conditions, both of climate and season." (Cheers.)

The news got round. A subordinate came to see me. He was in some way connected with a press agency. He asked me if I had any doubt in my mind that Kumasi was relieved and the garrison safe.

"Nothing official; you will have to wait for that, but you may take it from me privately that what you ask is true. You must make up your own details and act on your own responsibility."*

I knew how England would rejoice at this news; but here the crisis was now at hand: the Ashanti army must strike.

On the morning of July 17th I received the joyful news from the King of Beckwai that Colonel Morland with two guns and eight white officers had left Fumsu the day before for Beckwai via Obuassi. I had been standing by since dawn with my Nupe company, waiting to move off, while Captain Monck-Mason with his company carried on the guards and duties necessary for the protection of Beckwai. Midday came and still no news from Kokofu. I sought an interview with the King.

"Mr. Jones, do ask the King what is the meaning of this delay at Kokofu; the Big White Colonel will be starting back from Kumasi to-day if he has not already done so."

The King was evidently prepared for this question, for he immediately replied:

"Queen Ashantuah is going one better. She means to wipe out at one blow the Big White Colonel and all the soldiers on their way back. It will be another trap like the one you nearly walked into when you came to Esumeja."

"Are you certain of this, King?"

"What else could it be? It would be quicker than besieging Kumasi and make the Beckwais rebels quick. The moment the rebels leave Kokofu this time I go."

"Come, come, this is not carrying out your promise to co-operate. The White Colonel from Fumsu will be in Beckwai territory to-morrow and the Big White Colonel at any moment

* Several London papers of July 18th appeared with vivid accounts of the Relief of Kumasi. Two days later the news was published that the Relief of Kumasi had not been confirmed.

back at Pekki. The Beckwais there will not make one with the rebels. They will say 'fight and kill the white man and his soldiers first,' and then to each other they will say: 'Queen Ashantuah has fallen into the trap; she has sent her fighting men away and the White Captain at Beckwai will capture her at Kokofu.' Let the rebels capture the Big White Colonel's head, we shall then have Queen Ashantuah's. That will make you happy, so trust me to see you through this affair and protect you."

I went back to stand by and await news. The King had once more promised to keep me informed of every movement. Any attempt to anticipate the movement against Colonel Willcocks's command by an attack on Kokofu would only end in disaster and ruin our chances of a successful coup in capturing Queen Ashantuah. There was nothing for it but to sit tight.

Report after report began to come in. Lieutenant-Colonel Morland had reached Yakabu in Beckwai territory, Colonel Willcocks had reached Pekki, then both were on their way to Beckwai. Our excitement became intense. I was sitting in my hut when my native head of Intelligence rushed in.

"Good news, sir!"

"Yes, I know they are coming."

"No, no, sir, they have quarrelled, they have quarrelled!"

"What do you mean?"

"They have quarrelled, now is your chance, sir."

"Explain what you mean."

"Queen Ashantuah and the Ashanti chiefs have quarrelled. They won't make it up. The Adansis say they will no longer fight. Everyone says the war is lost, but Queen Ashantuah says she will fight on."

"This is very interesting news. What's the quarrel about?"

"Well, sir, the Ashanti chiefs wanted to lock the Big White Colonel and his soldiers in Kumasi, as Queen Ashantuah had promised to do. Queen Ashantuah suddenly learned that you were at Beckwai and then wanted to make you run away, catch the King of Beckwai, and all would be one with her. The Big White Colonel and his soldiers must then die. They talked all night, Queen Ashantuah saying if they go away from

Kokofu to Kumasi the White Captain will make her run away from Kokofu and the Beckwais will laugh. The chiefs kept on saying Esumeja was frightened. They had locked themselves in and the White Captain at Beckwai was a small man now. Queen Ashantuah shook her head all night. They got angry. They did nothing for three days. The war is lost, they now say. They are going home, but Queen Ashantuah says she will stop and fight."

"This is indeed good news. Go and follow this matter up. Try and find out what chiefs and their followers have gone home."

What a bit of luck for us this quarrel. How often in our history in dealing with African and Indian conquests, petty jealousies on the eve of success had been our salvation. Here it was once more; a chance that would never occur again for the Ashantis, at least I hoped not.

I went in search of Mr. Jones to talk the matter over with him. I had no difficulty in finding him.

"What is this I hear about a quarrel at Kokofu?"

"God be praised, that quarrel has saved us. The Old Terror wanted the King of Beckwai first, the chiefs wanted the Big White Colonel first. They have got neither and the King is so relieved. The danger is not yet over, many are leaving Kokofu, but mark my word, Queen Ashantuah will have them back again; you have no idea of the great power of this woman."

I took the opportunity to ask Mr. Jones about Queen Ashantuah's strange career, and this is what he told me, as nearly as I can remember in his own words:

"Queen Ashantuah of Ejissu, the Old Terror as she is called, was from her childhood brought up to maintain the religious traditions of the great Ashanti nation. She witnessed and took part in all the ceremonies carried out in accordance with the rituals of the Ashanti religion. She was hardened to see victim after victim brought to the sacrifice and the agonies they endured, but to her it was only a transitional stage before serving her ancient lineage in the great unknown. She saw hundreds of willing domestic victims go through this ceremony in order to continue to attend to the wants of their late masters, and when these were not forthcoming in sufficient

numbers, what was more natural, she would point out, than to take those from distant tribes?

"The coming of the White Man to Ashanti was, in her view, the means of causing much suffering to these ancient kings by denying victims to attend to their wants. You can easily understand why she absolutely refused to have a British resident in Kumasi and what a bitter blow it was to her that not only was a British Resident installed there, but their King taken into exile as a guarantee that they should no longer practise their religion.

"You remember my missionary work four years ago, and after the bloodless campaign I carried it on in Ashanti. You can now appreciate my uphill work. If only I could get the Ashantis to see that in the next world there will be no slaves to attend to our wants, I believe Christianity would spread throughout Ashanti; but that is not yet. The old religion is too deep rooted and Queen Ashantuah has made it her life-long ambition to maintain it.

"She knows only too well that so long as Ashanti remains a British protectorate her religion cannot be carried on; so she planned a terrible revenge which she means to complete, in spite of this latest quarrel at Kokofu. The chance came last March with the arrival of the Governor in Kumasi with Lady Hodgson. In the procession of filing past the Governor, who was in full dress uniform, Queen Ashantuah stopped to examine his medals, to select one to keep after her own great ceremony took place, when the one beat of the drum announced the Governor's head had dropped. Thank God she did not get him. She listened with the greatest attention to the Governor's speech. She was heard to say; 'Good, he is calling the Ashantis to arms for me! He could not do it better than he has done it in demanding the Golden Stool.'

"She watched the rising tide of rebellion. She revelled in the successes of the rebels and positively shouted with glee when the Acting Resident asked for terms of peace and was delighted when the lenient terms of the rebel chiefs were rejected. She considered the rebel chiefs who had offered them were not acting up to their religion or to the dignity of their

ancient customs. When these same rebels themselves appealed to the Acting Resident to make peace on your approach, Queen Ashantuah hurled scorn on them for daring to capitulate because many soldiers were coming up.

"She acted at once; you know what happened after that. You know her effect on the King and how many times he wanted to flee, but he did not tell you that the King of Kokofu, then a prisoner in Kumasi, had obeyed her order to escape to Kokofu to lead her army against you at Esumeja. Luckily he could not escape; I heard that he was caught in the act and was taken to the coast as a prisoner with the exodus from Kumasi. Neither did the King tell you of the order that Queen Ashantuah had sent forth from Kokofu, that all prisoners of war and Ashantis who did not join her should suffer the Ashanti fetish of human sacrifice.

"I will tell you what this means. The executioners spring upon the poor wretch from behind and drive a long, thin dagger through his cheeks and tongue to prevent him speaking. A long wooden skewer is then thrust through the muscles of his arms, fixing them behind, and in this horrible condition his legs are put in irons to keep him fast until he is wanted for execution. His fellow prisoners of war one by one go first, and when his turn comes the executioners, mad with blood, make a rush for him and force him on to the bowl. Then one of them, using a large knife, cuts into the spine, and so carves the head off, the one beat of the drum announcing that it has dropped. Men and women are treated alike. Isn't it terrible? Your poor soldiers and carriers have gone that way."

"Don't remind me," I begged, "of those eight weeks at Esumeja, listening to their ghastly work and war drumming; it was the only way of saving the white ladies and those in Kumasi from that same fate."

"God be thanked, but there must be many more to come. The war is still with us, a great religious war, and Queen Ashantuah will carry it through to the bitter end, and woe to those who defy her."

"Yes, hark! I can hear the bugles. They are back from Kumasi, hurrah!"

It was the first column, headed by Colonel Willcocks in person. It was formed up into three sides of a square. Colonel Willcocks made a short speech, three cheers were then given, and the parade dismissed. There was much handshaking and congratulations. We learned that the rest of the force with the rescued garrison would arrive the next afternoon under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Burroughs.

Soon afterwards another column, this time from Yakabu, arrived. It was Lieutenant-Colonel Morland's command. Its strength of one hundred men and two guns was quite inadequate to deal with a determined Adansi attack and very great credit is due to their pluck and determination in reaching Beckwai against such odds. There was no doubt that the quarrel saved them. Besides Lieutenant-Colonel Morland,* K.R.R. and Officer Commanding 1st W.A.F.F., were Captain H. Bryan,† 1st W.A.F.F., and Dr. Grant, while the following Special Service officers accompanied the column: Lieutenant-Colonel Montenaro, R.A., Major Weston, Captain Greer, Royal Warwickshire Regiment, Captain Sheffield, and Lieutenant Grahame.

Great was the enthusiasm of the officers of these two columns as they compared notes and congratulated each other.

"We never fired a shot all the way back from Kumasi," said one.

"We did even better," said another. "We never saw a single Adansi from the time we left Fumsu. There Major Ryde, the Commandant, held us back for three whole days from the 13th to the 16th, and we were warned before leaving that the Adansis were waiting for us in great numbers, and why they did not treat us as they did Lieutenant-Colonel Carter we are all at a loss to understand."

Everybody was smiling at their own good fortune. It was a red letter day for us all. I turned in early too. I would let Colonel Willcocks know in the morning the golden opportunity for adding another great achievement to his already long list. This chance at Kokofu must not be missed.

* General Sir Thomas Morland, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., D.S.O., A.D.C.

† Colonel Sir Herbert Bryan, K.B.E., C.M.G., D.S.O.

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

A Conversation and its Sequel

"HULLO, Hall, what can I do for you?"

It was the cheery greeting of Captain Haslewood, the newly-appointed A.D.C. to Colonel Willcocks, attending to his duties the morning after the return of the Relief Column. I had come to see if I could have a word with Colonel Willcocks. I was to be disappointed. Captain Haslewood shook his head and told me that it would be quite impossible as Colonel Willcocks was busy writing his official despatch of the Relief of Kumasi and had given very strict instructions that he was on no account to be disturbed. I briefly told Haslewood my object. He promised to fix up an opportunity later on. I then turned to the subject of the relief. I wanted to hear his own version of it.

"How did you get on?" I asked.

"Well," he said, "I hardly know how to express my feelings. I was completely stumped and mystified. At one time I really felt nervous. It was not of getting into Kumasi but of getting out. You will remember at Esumeja how Queen Ashantuah tried to tempt us on to Kumasi. She moved her troops away from Edjumun to do so, leaving only one thousand Ashantis at a war camp near the main road close to Kumasi, so that when we moved on they could put up a bit of a fight to make us use up our ammunition."

That, Haslewood went on to tell me, was exactly what had happened this time. On two separate occasions the Ashantis attacked our rearguard and when we reached the stockade it was clearly an action to make us use up ammunition. We found the war camp near the main road. It had been aban-

doned. Haslewood felt convinced that we were being tempted into Kumasi and when we reached the Fort he was certain of it and that the Ashantis had laid a trap for us. Anyone could see that they could have captured the Fort if they had wanted to. Why, then, did they not do so? It was as plain as a pikestaff. The Governor and population had escaped; Colonel Willcocks and his army must be tempted into Kumasi and there besieged. What better way of doing it?

"You see, Hall," he continued, "by leaving Captain Bishop alone the Ashantis knew we must go to Kumasi to relieve his garrison. This would be their chance of swooping down from Kokofu on to the stockades around Kumasi, shutting us, Esumeja, and Beckwai in and forcing the Beckwais to join them, and with the Adansis make a surrender of Kumasi inevitable. The Ashantis must have seen that if they allowed us to get back again from Kumasi we could take our own time to destroy them at Kokofu; so they were not going to be such fools as to miss this chance. I knew, when we were at Esumeja, that your own plan to keep the Ashantis away from Kumasi was to deliver an attack on Kokofu if they attempted to move, but as you were at Beckwai and Anderson in a blockhouse with a small garrison, I was on tenterhooks whether you would attempt to do such a bold stroke; so you see I was very anxious that we should leave Kumasi next day, but unfortunately the ground all round the Fort had to be cleared to give the new garrison a clear view of fire."

It was a terrible job, Haslewood told me. The wives and children of the garrison who had been left there, instead of going out with the civil population, remained with their husbands in the long grass around the Fort. They were in a terrible plight, and there were the bodies of those who had died during the siege to be dealt with also. The result was the force could not get off till the morning of the 17th. Then they were amazed to find not a single Ashanti to oppose them.

"All the way back," he concluded, "I kept glancing to my left expecting to see the Ashantis from Kokofu on us, but not a sign of them. I was mystified. What had happened? Perhaps you can help me to solve the mystery."

"A very simple one," I told him; "Queen Ashantuah and the Ashanti chiefs quarrelled and nothing was done."

He was amazed. "What!" he exclaimed, "Queen Ashantuah frightened that you were going to make her run away and would not let them move to Kumasi?"

"Partly; but not quite that. The old lady wanted to carry out her own plan of going to Esumeja and Beckwai first, and I don't mind telling you, Haslewood, that I was on tenterhooks myself when I realized, as you did, that the Ashantis would move to Kumasi and I might be powerless to deliver the counterstroke by being superseded, as I was, in command at Beckwai. Thank goodness it is all over now, and what about our messages?"

Haslewood told me that he went very carefully into the matter. One thing was perfectly clear; not a single written message reached Kumasi. The last written communication they had was when Captain Aplin's column came in. Captain Bishop was officially informed on the morning the Governor left Kumasi that authentic information had been received that the Relief Force was at Esumeja, and that the garrison would be relieved in five days at the very latest.

Now what was this authentic message? Haslewood could find no evidence of it. "The last one we were asked to get into Kumasi," he said, "was the one from Colonel Willcocks which reached us at Esumeja on June 18th. We failed to get a messenger to take it. No other written message was sent. Our previous one of June 11th was returned with the messenger on June 18th, he having failed to get in. The Governor's messenger, too, whom we sent off on June 11th, could not have delivered his written message, but I am convinced that if he had not got in himself he had succeeded in passing the information into Kumasi somehow, and that was the authentic information; but the five days must have been guesswork by someone.

"What I can't get over," Captain Haslewood went on, "is the cunning of the Ashantis in not taking the Fort so obviously at their mercy. Of course they would not have got the officers alive, they would see to that, but they could have made a

fine old human sacrifice with the garrison who were too ill and exhausted from want of food to offer an effective resistance. What a feather in the Ashantis' caps, you would have thought, but the wily beggars wanted a bigger prize. I believe they would have got it if they hadn't quarrelled. We had to walk into the trap, and I am delighted to be out of it again."

While Captain Haslewood was giving me his account, Colonel Willcocks was writing the following despatch, which was telegraphed to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, London.

"Beckwai, July 20th. Just returned from Kumasi, which was relieved July 15th after two days' running fight, ending in successful attack and dislodging enemy from four stockades within one mile from Kumasi. Enemy's position perfectly selected and prepared on high land, and completely hidden by almost impenetrable bush. I had spread report that I would attack Kokofu to the east* of Beckwai on July 13th, and several thousands of the enemy came from direction of Kumasi for defence of Kokofu; but on the same day I suddenly marched to Pekki; fifteen miles to the west* of Beckwai; march lasted nineteen hours, going through worst paths and jungle troops ever marched in; incessant rain prevailed.

"July 14th I reached Ekwanta; Captain Eden, West African Frontier Force, and Lieutenant Edwards, Sierra Leone Police Force, carried village Treda with bayonet; village held by six hundred of the enemy. Following casualties reported: Four native soldiers wounded. Enemy's force extremely surprised at bayonet charge; enemy fled. leaving behind a great many goats, sheep, etc. Rearguard attacked at midday, but the maxim gun soon silenced enemy's force: one native soldier West African Frontier Force wounded.

"July 15th I left Ekwanta at dawn through roads in indescribably bad condition: guns moved with greatest difficulty, but at the same time all kept up. Rearguard attack three o'clock in the afternoon repulsed by Major Beddoes, West African

* Kokofu is north-east of Beckwai, and Pekki north-west. Kumasi is north.

Frontier Force. Four-thirty o'clock in the afternoon Major Melliss, West African Frontier Force, and Lieutenant Edwards, Sierra Leone Police Force, leaders of scouts, heavily fired on, both of them slightly wounded: Major Wilkinson, Inspector-General of Gold Coast Constabulary, officer commanding advanced guard, brought up all the field guns under Phillips, West African Frontier Force, and also three maxim guns, as it was evident that we were now in the face of enemy's entrenched position.

"I gave orders for infantry to extend to both flanks: entangled bush had to be cut before any men could possibly penetrate. After twenty minutes, infantry had extended sufficiently, facing north, and two companies facing east towards rising ground, on which side enemy kept up heavy fire, although the four maxim guns were busily employed against them.

"About twenty casualties had now taken place, and having full confidence in officers and men, I determined, notwithstanding the enemy being posted behind, to advance with the bayonet: the bugles sounded cease firing: they were promptly obeyed, and the charge could not have been beaten in *elan* by any soldiers.

"I am proud of Yoruba native soldiers, West African Frontier Force, who formed bulk of charging force, and any misgivings as to their qualities which may hitherto have been felt by those who only believed in the Hausas are vanished. Their gallant effort is the admiration of every officer present at the fight.

"The bayonet charge absolutely paralysed enemy, who at once ceased firing and fled away in thousands, leaving behind a great many mangled dead in the stockades and the bush, showing terrific havoc caused by 75-mm. guns, news of which will, I hope, spread over all this country.

"I have destroyed war camp of the Commander-in-Chief of the Ashanti army, situated near main road, and I entered Kumasi at six in the evening. Terrible scenes of desolation and of horror; stench sickening; nothing but burnt-down houses and putrid bodies to be seen, the latter right up to the walls of the fort. Garrison delighted beyond words. Native

soldiers most of them too weak to stand. British officers thanked God for relief, as a few more days would have seen the last of the defence.

"I left Kumasi July 17th, leaving behind one hundred and fifty native soldiers under Captain Eden, Lieutenant Mayne, Medical Officer Thompson, and Sergeant Desborough, R.A., all West African Frontier Force, and ample supplies of ammunition and of food for seven weeks, long before which I will have reinforced detachment with a force sufficient to feed itself from the surrounding villages, etc. I brought away from Kumasi old garrison, most of them in hammocks, and also a great many refugees, women, and children. Before departure from Kumasi had buried heaps of rotting corpses which must have been lying near fort for weeks past. I had also cut short bush and the grass which was growing up quite close to the walls of the fort. The work was sickening in the extreme but at the same time all ranks helped bravely.

"In my opinion the garrison left behind at Kumasi was altogether unequal to the task of holding fort, and nothing less than fear of Ashantis to attack could have saved them notwithstanding strong fort. I have never seen anything so gruesome as the vicinity fort. I expected, with my one thousand seven hundred unarmed native followers and the sick and wounded, some difficulty in coming out; but enemy's being completely dispersed on July 15th seems to have frightened them, as they did not fire a shot for twenty-five miles' march which took three days owing to two days' excessive rain.

"I cannot end without bringing to notice the soldierly qualities of officers and men under trials I have personally never previously known in my long experience of jungle warfare, their cheerfulness under every form of discomfort, their valour against the unseen and unknown numbers, on half rations native soldiers without any blankets, yet always cheery. They are deserving of high praise. Amongst those whom I shall bring to notice, the following were conspicuous on July 15th Major Henstock, West India Regiment, Chief of the Staff Major Wilkinson, 1st Northumberland Fusiliers; Captain Holford, 7th Hussars, D.A.A.G., McClintock, R.E., We

African Frontier Force D.A.A.G., Eden, 1st Battalion Oxford Light Infantry, W.A.F.F.; Wright, 1st Battalion Manchester Regiment, W.A.F.F.; Lieutenants Phillips, R.A., W.A.F.F.; Edwards, Sierra Leone Police Force, Cartwright, 1st Battalion Durham Light Infantry, West African Regiment; Sergeant-Major Bosher, R.A., W.A.F.F.; Sergeant Farini, 1st Battalion Durham Light Infantry, W.A.F.F.; Dr. McDowell, Principal Medical Officer, has been invaluable.

"Of the civil officers attached to force, I specially commend Haddon-Smith, Gold Coast Civil Service, who has served in every capacity as soldier and civilian since the force left Cape Coast. Following casualties reported: Two native soldiers West African Frontier Force killed in action; two British officers before mentioned slightly wounded; twenty-three native soldiers wounded.

"WILLCOCKS."

Returning from a parade that afternoon I was hailed by Captain Haslewood.

"Hall, the Colonel and I are on our way to visit the Field Hospital, come along and have your word with him."

Colonel Willcocks had stopped awaiting us. He was smartly turned out with ribbons up for practically every campaign from Afghanistan to West Africa, one of the original awards of the D.S.O., and a C.M.G. He looked a typical G.O.C. and the envy of medal hunters.

"Hullo, Hall," he began. "What do you want to see me about?"

"An opportunity of disposing of Kokofu, sir. I have good reason to believe that dissensions have broken out there and prompt action by us may do the trick."

"Quite impossible, Hall, we want time to make our preparations. The troops are not back from Kumasi yet and we must wait for the Central African Regiment and get up more ammunition and shells. You see, we cannot have another reverse there, and I am not going to run any risk this time."

That was definite enough, but I thought I would have one more try.

"Sir," I began, "why not put my information to the test by a strong reconnaissance? You will not commit yourself by so doing and every day's delay will make all the difference. My information is from my native head of Intelligence. Captain Haslewood will verify the trustworthiness of this man and he knows where to find him should you wish to see him. I have no doubt whatever that his information is accurate, This opportunity may never occur again and if I had the choice, sir, I would rather have a small force now than a large one in a week's time. Queen Ashantuah is a veritable martinet, and give her time she will have unity again."

"Yes, Hall, I see your point. I will think the matter over."

Soon afterwards the advance portion of Lieutenant-Colonel Burroughs's command began to arrive from Pekki. We were all there to welcome them. The column seemed never ending. Carriers and soldiers in single file, hammock after hammock with sick and wounded, limping Hausas of the old original garrison, the pathetic sight of their wives and children, labouring under what chattels they could carry on their heads, the tired and weary tramp of everybody soaked to the skin—it was a sight never to be forgotten, a pathetic but glorious ending to an achievement which will for ever remain in the history of the British Empire.

The officers of the old original garrison received a great ovation. Everybody was anxious to have a handshake with them, and I a word with my old school friend, John Ralph, whom I had not seen for years. I saw my native head at work amongst the Hausas of the old garrison. I bet he is finding out something, I thought.

The column was not kept waiting. They were dismissed to their quarters as they came in. All they wanted was rest, food, and shelter. They had well earned them.

Next day, July 21st, was a day of reorganization of the Ashanti Field Force. Red tabs sprang up as if by magic, Field Force Orders made their appearance, everybody was inspecting or being inspected, our Chief Staff Officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Henstock, was moulding us into a veritable Aldershot.

I was sent for to see Lieutenant-Colonel Morland, who had

arrived from Nigeria two days previously and was far from well, in fact in bed. He told me that he had been asked to go to Kokofu and make a reconnaissance in force there. I was to go, too, with my company.

"I gather, Hall," he began, "that dissension has broken out there and you are in favour of an immediate attack. My instructions are very definite. I am to make a reconnaissance, but unless I feel certain of my ability to carry the position, I am not to make a direct attack upon the place. I hear you and E Company have already been there. I am very pleased as Officer Commanding 1st W.A.F.F. and your Commanding Officer to hear how well E and D Companies have done since you brought them from Jebba, and still more pleased to learn from Colonel Willcocks that you did the right thing in not going into Kumasi; he assured me that if you had, the Ashanti Field Force could not have reached Beckwai or Kumasi been saved.*

"I shall take D Company to-morrow as my escort. I am glad to tell you that Colour-Sergeant Mackenzie is to be recommended for the V.C. I am very sorry indeed to learn about poor Wilson and the heavy losses of E Company. You have lost Colour-Sergeant Humphries too. I shall not replace them to-morrow; newcomers at the last moment would only impair the efficiency of your company. I know well that your men have the greatest confidence in you and will follow you anywhere. I shall never forget how you dealt in Nigeria with their one and only mutiny, and the brilliant way they afterwards behaved in the action and capture of Dandegusu for which, Colonel Willcocks told me, you received the thanks of the Secretary of State for the Colonies.

"Now about to-morrow. You will find all particulars in to-night's orders; so tell me about Kokofu and what to expect."

* Extracts from Official Despatches dated Beckwai, August 14, 1900:

"Capt. W. M. Hall. For many weeks this officer held Esumeja and kept the King of Beckwai loyal. He deserves great credit.

"It was his presence alone which kept the Beckwai king from fleeing south."

"You will certainly have a fight, sir," I replied; "my Nupe men will welcome this opportunity of settling old scores, and if a certain ruse be adopted, I believe the situation will so develop as to make you certain of carrying the position and attacking in accordance with your instructions, sir."

He asked me what my idea was, and I explained it pretty much in the following words:

"Kokofu," I said, "is one and three-quarter miles due east of Esumeja. About one thousand yards short of it is a small village. The roofs of the houses have been burnt but the high mud walls form excellent places for shelter and concealment. From this burnt village the ground slopes down for five hundred yards, then rises again for a similar distance where the town proper begins. The rising ground is open cultivation. At the bottom of these two slopes is the enemy's main line of defence, a heavily timbered stockade concealed in dense undergrowth and jungle trees. The stockade is about seven hundred yards long and may possibly have been extended by now to cover both flanks. For weeks past, in order to maintain an active defence of Esumeja and to keep the Ashanti army pinned to Kokofu, constant feints were made by us which consisted in occupying the burnt village, extending down the slope, and as soon as it was ascertained that the stockades were manned, the troops were withdrawn, and in no single case did the enemy attempt to follow.

"The enemy after a time took it for granted, and became indifferent. It is this indifference, together with the dissension which I now believe exists, that I suggest you take advantage of, that is to say, make the feint attack, withdraw, conceal as many as possible in the burnt village including the guns, and if necessary march the rearguard back. Keep a careful watch for the withdrawal of the enemy from the stockade, then launch your stroke and seize the stockade before the enemy reach it again. Once the stockade is gained a bayonet charge up the rising slope of open cultivation would scatter the advancing Ashantis attempting to re-occupy the stockade.

"Of course," I added, "the enemy may not be gulled, and

you may have to fall back upon the orthodox method of attack, but I think it is worth trying, sir. Two things are essential. Absolute silence must be maintained and a good long halt allowed at Esumeja, so as to convey the impression to enemy scouts that we are reinforcements or relief units to Esumeja and not troops marching direct on Kokofu."

With this Colonel Morland thanked me and I withdrew.

I read the orders that night. I found the position of my company was in the advance guard, commanded by Major Melliss. The order of march was as follows:

ADVANCE GUARD.

Half company West African Regiment, under Captain St. Hill acting as scouts.

E Company (Nupe) 1st W.A.F.F., Captain W. M. Hall.

F Company 1st W.A.F.F., Major C. J. Melliss, Captain Biss, and Colour-Sergeant Foster.

MAIN BODY.

Fifty Pioneers under Captain Neal.

The guns under Major Montenaro, Lieutenant Phillips and Lieutenant Halfpenny, and Sergeant-Major Bosher.

Escort half company West African Regiment under Lieutenant Greer.

Lieutenant-Colonel Morland and staff.

Personal escort of D Company 1st W.A.F.F.—Captain Wright and Lieutenant Grahame.

Dressing Station, with two medical officers and twelve hammocks and stretchers; Dr. Buée in charge.

Half company 3rd W.A.F.F. under Captain Shortlands.

One company W.A.R. under Captain Tighe, D.S.O.

Half E Company 2nd W.A.F.F. under Captain Greer.

Reserve ammunition column.

Field hospital of eighteen hammocks and stretchers, with two medical officers, Dr. Langstaff in charge.

REARGUARD.

Half E Company 2nd W.A.F.F. under Captain Monck-Mason.

B Company 2nd W.A.F.F. under Major Beddoes.

I reckoned up our strength. We were only a few mer stronger, except in artillery, than the force which previously unsuccessfully attacked Kokofu and suffered such heavy casualties. Colonel Willcocks was indeed taking me at my word. What price my military career if we failed too? No wonder he gave those instructions to Colonel Morland.

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

A War Dance

SUNDAY, July 22nd, was a memorable day. The column, under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel T. Morland, King's Royal Rifles, moved off punctually at 6 a.m. to carry out the reconnaissance in force on Kokofu. We halted and were given two hours' rest at Esumeja, during which a meal was partaken of. We left Esumeja at 10 a.m. on our march to the burnt village. Absolute silence was maintained, but progress had to be necessarily slow to allow the five guns to maintain their station in the column.

The burnt village was reached. The advance guard moved forward and extended a little way down the slope, while the scouts of the West African Regiment, under Captain St. Hill took up position well out on both flanks; at the same time the guns were being assembled in the burnt village.

No enemy signal gun had yet been fired. This was puzzling, as on every previous occasion signal guns were fired as soon as we left the cross-paths half a mile away from Esumeja. Something was amiss. I moved forward. I looked at my watch; it was nearly twelve o'clock. It flashed on me that the Ashantis had either evacuated Kokofu or were partaking of their midday meals in their five war camps and that the picket behind the stockade were indulging in a meal instead of attending to their duties.

My heart gave a jump. The moment had come. A few seconds sufficed to explain everything to Major Melliss.

"I shall approach as near as possible with my company and then charge. Please support me with your company," was his order in a whisper, and turning towards his company he placed

his forefinger to his lips and drew his sword. His men fixed their bayonets and moved forward. E Company and the scouts did likewise.

The forward movement went on in breathless silence, nearer and nearer—only 80 yards left. Bang! A cheer went up loud enough to waken the dead. Major Melliss spurted along the path mounted the stockade and over, closely followed by his men with Captain Biss and Colour-Sergeant Foster. E Company and the scouts went over wherever an opening presented itself, the whole forming a broad front up the open rising ground to meet the oncoming Ashantis, who were firing their guns as they ran.

The clash was brief, Major Melliss personally accounting for several. The Ashantis turned and fled, throwing their guns away as they ran, closely followed into the town, where everybody and everything was being stampeded.

The pursuit continued; an ugly rush of the Ashantis from their war camps to the north and south called for a halt.

"You, Hall, tackle the beggars on the north side, and I will tackle those on the south," was Major Melliss's quiet order.

Our men needed no bidding. Their blood was up. They were mad to use their bayonets.

In the meantime Major Montenaro had succeeded in getting his guns over the stockade with his escort under Lieutenant Greer, and was moving forward up the rise. They, too, met the force of the final rush of the Ashantis, and D Company, under Captain Wright, with Lieutenant Grahame, was only just in time to support Lieutenant Greer in stopping the rush from both flanks.

Kokofu was ours, Queen Ashantuah in full retreat, loot galore, and a hot meal left by the Ashantis ready for all and sundry.

With the arrival of the rest of the troops patrols were sent out and a line of outposts taken up. The Ashantis were in full retreat eastward.

The paths were strewn with articles of every description. A search of the five war camps was organized. It revealed an armoury containing a number of Dane guns, several rifles, four carbines belonging to D Company 1st W.A.F.F., and a large amount of Martini and Snider ammunition, as well as fourteen

kegs of gunpowder and some dum-dum bullets. In all over two hundred Dane guns were collected, abandoned by the Ashantis in our charges. Everywhere were wooden receptacles containing hot steaming food, with small wooden stools set round them. Some of our men and carriers were already helping themselves.

The advance guard and D Company were allowed to fall out and rest. E and D Company, who had been facing Kokofu on and off since May 22nd, during which time they suffered so many casualties, gave vent to their feelings in a veritable war-dance. They seized some war drums, the very drums that for so long had hurled defiance at us at Esumeja and began drumming. The W.A.R. joined them and the men shrieked and yelled with carbines held high and bayonets in hand. They worked themselves into a frenzy. It was startling. I made no attempt to interfere with them. I sympathized with their feelings and thought of poor Wilson, Beamish, Humphries, Mackenzie, and Payne. How they would have loved to have been here to see this. An audience of officers and men had gathered round. They watched the proceedings with evident interest. It was a revelation to the Special Service officers and in the end I had to intervene, the war dancers were becoming dangerous to each other.

I started investigating Kokofu. It was quite a well-laid-out town with open cultivation around it. The houses were of the usual Ashanti type. I went out to inspect the five war camps, which were very extensive and showed signs of having been occupied for a considerable period. The wooden receptacles with still unconsumed food in each of the well built shelters were a testimony to the futile attempt to reach the stockade and stem our entry into the town. Each of these war camps, with their shelters, must have accommodated at least three thousand men, and the town itself bore evidence of its accommodation having been taxed to its utmost limit. It was clear that the estimate worked out at Esumeja of a total of twenty thousand being at Kokofu since the first week of June was not far wrong.

What would these scattered Ashantis do now? I felt that

there. He is going to stick to Beckwai as his headquarters and concentration until he can deal with those scattered Ashantis and make sure of his line of communication."

I said that I was delighted to hear it, for it was the policy I had tried to advocate all along and I was still inclined to think that Queen Ashantuah would not give up the struggle so easily and would have another shot to pin-prick us at or near Kokofu, while the disappointed chiefs would give us all the trouble they could everywhere.

"I found Kokofu most interesting," I went on. "I located the five war camps; they were every bit as large as we were told. Looking back it seems extraordinary that we at Esumeja, with at one time only a hundred and thirty men in an open village, should not only have held them at Kokofu, but actually kept them from swamping us. We found the four missing carbines of D Company there, a regular arsenal, and when E Company found those war drums which you remember made sleep impossible, they could not resist letting their feelings go and by jove it was a war-dance too. The W.A.R. started it and D Company joined in it too."

"Yes, Hall, I'm sorry I missed it. I see a presentation of flowers coming for you too; I'm off."

In came my old missionary friend, Mr. Jones, with a native carrying a basket of fruit. Pointing to it, he said: "The King has asked me to take it to you with his very best regards. He is so pleased now that he acted on your advice. He wished to make you a more substantial appreciation, but I told him you might not like it."

"Quite right, Mr. Jones. Thank him for me and tell him how grateful I am for warning me of the trap Queen Ashantuah had laid for us. There is no doubt whatever that had we gone on from Esumeja to Edjumun, if we had not been annihilated we most certainly would have been driven into Kumasi, and not only would those in Kumasi have suffered a terrible Ashanti revenge, but probably Ashanti would have been lost for ever. I must thank you, too, for all the information you gave me and for writing those notes, especially that note warning us that the Achimas were coming to attack us at Esumeja. I was

able to give the Governor's messenger this tip before he started back to Kumasi on June 11th, and I believe this information was acted upon."

"Indeed it was sir," he agreed; "Kwatchie N'Ketia, the old chief of N'Kwanta, knew what he was talking about when he told of his plan for getting them out of Kumasi. Take it from me, sir, that he and the kings in Kumasi came out with the Governor because they were told how matters stood outside. I can assure you that if it hadn't been for Queen Ashantuah having to fight it out at Kokofu and the Achimas out of the way, not a living soul who came out of Kumasi or remained behind would have escaped the Ashantis. The King of Beckwai's linguist told me this; you know he was in Kumasi and came out with the Governor."

I thanked him for telling me this. I had thought as much already, but now I knew it. "You see now what Kumasi owes to you," I said. "Their escape was an act of Providence and you were indeed a missionary of God."

CHAPTER THIRTY

The Denkeras at Last and a Fight

A BUGLE call rang out, and I went to the orderly-room, telling my sergeant-major to carry on inspecting the carbines, checking the ammunition, and making a list of replacements.

My old native sergeant-major was a character. He was a Senegalese who had served the French well in many campaigns, but for some unknown reason, when we were in close contact with the French in Northern Nigeria, during the critical days of 1898, when war between us appeared imminent, he deserted and came over to us. He enlisted in my company and had served me well for two and a half years. He was a splendid linguist, a man of fine physique, popular with the men, and proud of his wounds and scars.

I entered the hut used as an orderly-room. Lieutenant-Colonel Morland was seated attending to correspondence. He looked ill and was undoubtedly in for a go of fever.

"Just look at this order," he began. "I have got to find two companies to go off again. We are to find and engage the scattered Ashantis of yesterday and reoccupy Kwisa. A beginning is to be made from Fumsu northwards. This order says that some four thousand Denkera levies have arrived at Obuassi and I have to detail a company to proceed there to-day, take the levies over, and operate between that place and the main Cape Coast Road, collect what food they can, live on the country, and burn, pillage, and loot."

"This must be, sir," I suggested, "to punish the Adansis for breaking a solemn agreement I entered into with the king and chiefs of Adansi on my way up. The Denkera levies have been a long time coming. I wrote two letters to their king at the

end of May and another on June 16th, asking the King of Denkera to come and help us. He sent me a letter promising support."

"Well," said Lieutenant-Colonel Morland, "You've got him to move at last; the great thing was that he kept loyal and your good friend. Now I must ask you to make another effort and go with your company to-morrow to join a column that is being formed here to engage the Ashantis believed to be moving on the east side of the Cape Coast to Kumasi road between Fumsu and Kokofu. Full details will appear in orders to-night. Captain Wright, with Lieutenant Grahame, Dr. Grant, and D Company leave for Obuassi this afternoon."

In orders that evening the fighting column was composed as follows: one 75-mm. gun under Lieutenant Phillips; one 7-pounder under Lieutenant Halfpenny; A Company, West African Regiment, under Captain Stallard; E Company 1st W.A.F.F., under Captain Hall; B Company, 2nd W.A.F.F., under Major Beddoes and Captain Greer; E Company 2nd W.A.F.F., under Captain Monck-Mason.

It was to be prepared to take the field for seven days and to march as light as possible; Major Beddoes to be in command. On arrival of the column at Kwisa, which had been abandoned for the second time on July 11th, the company of the West African Regiment was to be detached for the garrison of that place and to open up the telegraph line to Fumsu. Kwisa was reached on the 26th of July without opposition, and on the 27th an Ashanti scout was discovered hiding in a tall tree and captured. He offered to lead us to an Ashanti war camp if his life was spared. The offer was accepted, and on the morning of the 28th the force moved off in an easterly direction, leaving the W.A.R. in garrison at Kwisa. The day was uneventful, as was the 29th, still marching eastward.

Parading before dawn on the 30th the column moved off at 5 a.m., passing through the line of outposts, which was then called in and with the rest of my company formed the rear-guard, it being our turn for this duty.

When dawn broke it was seen that we were marching in a north-westerly direction towards Kokotru. The country was

becoming very hilly and the forest thinner; in fact, the column was moving along a continuation of the Moinsi hills, more like English parkland than anything I had seen in West Africa.

Just before 6 a.m. the column halted. Word was passed down that scouts were being sent forward to investigate, and this was followed by a warning to be on the alert as an evacuated war camp had been found. I accordingly threw out strong flanking parties on both flanks so as to protect the long line of carriers with hammocks, ammunition, food, etc., and leave the main body free for action. Leaving my Senegalese Sergeant-Major with twenty men to act as extreme rearguard, I took up my position with the rest of my Company with the maxim gun detachment in the line of carriers, to act as a reserve in case of emergency.

In this formation the advance recommenced. We passed the war camp. A hurried inspection showed that it had just been evacuated. A sudden burst of firing in front broke out. The column halted. The firing continued and parties of the enemy appeared to be working round. I accordingly extended both flanking parties outwards, strengthening them from my reserve and extending the extreme rearguard so as to form three sides of a square with the maxim gun ready to move. The firing in front died down, and no attack developing in our rear, I awaited the forward movement to commence. There was a wait of a quarter of an hour. I became impatient. I went forward and met Captain Greer on his way back from the front to speak to me. He reported that Major Beddoes, while operating with the scouts, had been severely wounded and was now in a hammock, and they did not know who was the next senior to take command.

"What is your seniority?" he asked.

"My seniority as a Captain in the West African Frontier Force is November 27, 1897."

"Mine in the 3rd Royal Warwickshire Regiment is June 1, 1898; you are the senior officer."

"I am not so sure, Greer," I said. "In my British regiment it is only March 20, 1899. But whoever is senior is not the point. It is imperative to advance quickly so as not to give

the enemy time to prepare for us. It would be a fatal delay to change the position of our companies; you cannot take charge of the rearguard as you do not know a word of Nupe and I cannot go up to the front and keep an eye on them myself. So you go back, take over the command, push on and engage the enemy until we get to their main war camp and the village and capture it at all costs. I will conform to your movements."

The advance was sounded. Two miles had been covered when the enemy were again reported occupying a dense ravine in our immediate front. Captain Greer ordered the two maxims to bring a cross-fire to bear on the ravine. The effect was magical; the Ashantis were in full retreat again. We advanced; the ravine was found to be full of dead bodies and blood, in fact, for a distance of two or three miles there was a regular succession of blood tracks. The country became still more hilly and even more open. A stockade nearly three hundred yards long ingeniously concealed was located, but fortunately for us not held.

We moved on in our oblong formation, that is to say, the front face was formed of half E Company 2nd W.A.F.F., on the right, with the remainder of that company turned back to form the right flank, while the opposite angle was formed by B Company, the two maxims being placed in the front face with the 75-mm. gun in the centre on the path. A small reserve of these two companies were on the path in rear of the 75-mm. gun, then the 7-pounder with its detachment, followed by the field hospital, reserve ammunition, and baggage column. The rear portion of the oblong was formed by my company as already mentioned. With so many carriers with their loads confined to the path, an undefended gap in the centre of both flanks was inevitable.

About noon, while the oblong was marching on the side of a small hill, the path sloped down to a stream, and then zig-zagged steeply upwards between two dominating hills, both of which were held in great strength, and fire was opened on us. We halted and the fire was returned. The enemy were using rifles, for casualties began to occur, and soon afterwards

the Ashantis launched their attack, so unexpected that I was almost taken aback, for over the brow of the hill on our right coming straight for the right flank of the oblong, a strong rapid attack was developing.

The Ashantis, who had moved unseen round the reverse side of the spur, were firing their Dane guns as they advanced. My reserve and maxim were moved to fill up the gap in the right flank, the left flanking party brought over to the right, and the extreme rearguard on the rear face wheeled outwards to the left. We were thus in line to meet this attack. Lieutenant Halfpenny, with his detachment of West India Regiment, who for some reason or other could not use the 7-pounder, acted as infantry and gave further support to the right flank.

The Ashantis were still creeping round and over the brow of the hill in ever-increasing numbers. I was astonished but delighted at the steadiness of my men. Their several fights had given them absolute confidence in their carbines. Some were firing standing, others kneeling. They seemed to enjoy bowling them over. They must have been thinking of their lost comrades. My native N.C.O., in charge of the maxim, was as cool as a cucumber; he absolutely revelled in a burst of three rounds whenever a head appeared over the brow of the hill. The fight had already lasted an hour and still the Ashantis were attacking. We had already suffered many casualties. Lieutenant Phillips was then severely wounded, and soon afterwards, during another attack on our right flank, Lieutenant Swabey, shortly to be followed by Captain Monck-Mason. When Colour-Sergeant Blair was hit the time had arrived for something desperate to be done.

Captain Greer then ordered Captain Neal to wheel up his left flank, take command of the reserves, extend them to the left, and open a rapid cross-fire on the front line of hills. While this operation was in progress I ordered my Senegalese Sergeant-Major to clear the brow of the hill in our vicinity and followed this up by wheeling the rest of the company, when well clear of the right flank, to the left, parallel with the front line. The maxim gun was placed on the right, fire was opened on the two front hills, and with the gun and maxims

delivering a hot fire the Ashantis were seen to break and run.

The engagement had lasted nearly two hours, and the capacity of our field hospital was taxed to the utmost. The oblong was reformed and the advance was continued across the stream and up the hillside, and the number of dead we encountered testified to the severe punishment the Ashantis had received.

The Ashantis, however, were not to be denied, for about 4.30 p.m. the oblong was suddenly attacked from a strong position in our immediate front. The Ashantis advanced and actually charged, discharging their Dane guns to within twenty yards of the front line. Fortunately, their aim was high, as they fired from the hips, and they were met with a murderous fire which drove them back to their line of entrenchments. Captain Greer then ordered up the 7-pounder and my maxim from the rearguard and opened a heavy fire of two guns, three maxims, and the whole of the 2nd W.A.F.F. on the enemy's position. It was a veritable tornado, and at precisely the right moment Captain Greer ordered a cease fire and to charge.

With bugles sounding and ringing cheers, Captain Neal and Lieutenant Halfpenny, with swords drawn, led their men in a gallant charge which was irresistible, and the enemy fled. The engagement had lasted about an hour. We had captured the war camp, and it was learnt that the Ashantis had been led by Opoku, one of their most prominent leaders.

When the charge had sounded I moved forward with some of my men to join in it. The exertion was too much for me. I must have collapsed, for I found myself being lifted out of a hammock in a village behind the war camp, where the victorious troops had entered and were to halt for the night. It was not long, however, before my Senegalese Sergeant-Major arrived to report that everybody was safely in, and reporting this fact to Captain Greer, I warmly congratulated him on his success that day.

While in the village we learnt of further war camps, but Captain Greer wisely decided to return with our wounded to Beckwai, which was reached without incident on August 1st.

Colonel Willcocks, after receiving us, sent the following telegram to the Secretary of State for the Colonies:

Beckwai,
August 1st.

On July 24th sent flying column, under the command of Major Beddoes, 1st Battalion Royal Dublin Fusiliers and 2nd Battalion of West African Frontier Force of four hundred native soldiers, with one 75-mm. gun, all West African Frontier Force and one 7-pounder R.M.L. gun of 150 lb. West India Regiment, to reopen telegraph line between Fumsu and Kwisa and clear flanks of road to Prahsu and Kwisa to the east of Dompuassi which for a long time has threatened our lines of communication.

Beddoes has just returned, having by very good marching through dense forests found rebel camp ten miles to the east of Fomena on July 30th.

Flying column was three times attacked by approximately three thousand five hundred Adansis and Kokofus, but after stubborn resistance, Beddoes has captured large rebel camp, which he completely destroyed, killing many of the rebel forces, and has taken prisoners. Conduct and discipline of all ranks excellent.

Regret to report heavy losses, considering our small number. Major Beddoes and Lieutenant Phillips, Royal Artillery, and also Lieutenant Swabey, West India Regiment, severely wounded; and Captain Monck-Mason, 1st Battalion Royal Munster Fusiliers, and Colour-Sergeant Blair, 1st Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers, both West African Frontier Force, slightly wounded; and also one native soldier killed in action and six dangerously wounded, six severely wounded, seventeen slightly wounded.

Following deserving of special mention: Major Beddoes, who is a really excellent officer; Captain Greer, 3rd Battalion of Royal Warwickshire Regiment, attached for duty to West African Frontier Force, who took over command after Beddoes was wounded; Captain Neal, Lagos Constabulary; and also Lieutenant Phillips, R.A., West African Frontier Force.

J. Willcocks.

"Hullo, Haslewood, how are things going?"

"None too well, Hall; the scattering of Kokofu is the very devil. They are all over the place; they are even threatening Pekki, and Major Melliss with F Company had to be sent there

to garrison it. I hear you had some tough fighting and that there is plenty more to be done in that neighbourhood. Queen Ashantuah is reported to be near Kokofu again, and I understand you are going to take over Esumeja once more to keep an eye on her. These detached concentrations on the line of communication make a forward move by Colonel Willcocks to Kumasi quite out of the question until they are disposed of, and as the garrison of Kumasi will require reprovisioning, a second relief column is being despatched there via Pekki.

"Did you see the Queen's telegram? The War Office has promoted our chief to the rank of Brevet-Colonel. We wonder what the Queen will give him. Here is the Field Force Order about the telegram."

I read:

Special Order by Colonel J. Willcocks, C.M.G., D.S.O., Commanding Ashanti Field Force.

Beckwai,
No. 111. July 26, 1900.

Royal Message.

The Officer Commanding the Field Force feels great pride in publishing for the information of all ranks of the Force the following telegram received from Her Majesty the Queen:

From H.M. the Queen, Osborne.
To Colonel Willcocks.

Sincerely congratulate you and all troops under your command on the relief of KUMASI so ably carried out under exceptional difficulties.

"V.R.I."

If anything were needed to stimulate the troops to greater efforts the O.C. Field Force feels sure Her Majesty's Gracious message would more than compensate them for any hardships undergone in the past or to be expected in the future.

(By order) F. F. HENSTOCK, Major
(Chief Staff Officer Ashanti Field Force).

It was a characteristic piece of thoughtfulness on the Queen's part.

Haslewood also told me of the curious report of Lieutenant Slater's death at Kwisa, which had appeared in the London papers, together with an obituary notice. It will be remembered that over two months previously, when the Adansi army had assembled to take first the Ashanti goldfields and then Kwisa I had sent back D Company from Esumeja just in time to frustrate the attack on the goldfields and to save Kwisa.

It seems that during an ambush Lieutenant Slater dropped on his knees to take cover, and that two of his soldiers, when they saw this, bolted and did not stop till they got to the coast. In order to cover up their desertion they concocted a yarn that Slater's force had been ambushed near Kwisa and Slater himself and a number of Hausas had been killed. Happily this was far from being the case, and as a result of the risk I took at Esumeja in sending D Company back, the Ashanti goldfields were saved. But it was tragic to think of the grief that Slater's parents had to bear until the report was rectified. The two deserters were later tried at Cape Coast Castle and received twenty years' penal servitude each.

I heard also from Haslewood that the field hospital was full, and that a number of officers and British N.C.O.s were to be sent home as soon as the Kwisa–Fumsu Road was safe for a convoy. Among these was Lieutenant-Colonel Morland.

Accordingly, after my talk with Haslewood I went round to see Lieutenant-Colonel Morland in the hospital. It was sad to see there a number of officers whose faces a few weeks ago had been glowing with health, but were now drawn and sallow, although they appeared cheery enough. Lieutenant-Colonel Montenaro was down with fever and Edwards was in a very weak condition with dysentery. Lieutenant-Colonel Morland had a cheery word for me, but was evidently depressed at the prospect of being invalided home. He told me that he wanted me to take charge of the convoy that would go with them because he said he would feel happier if my veteran company formed the escort. When the time came this was arranged.

A hospital convoy is at the best of times a sad affair. In our case it was a very trying one. Each patient had to be placed on a long piece of canvas slung on to a bamboo pole, at each

end of which was fixed a wooden crosspiece to rest on the heads of the four native hammock-men whose job it was to carry it along. The only covering against the torrential rain was another strip of canvas, stiffened by wooden battens, stretched along the top side of the bamboo pole. A few were more elaborate, to carry a helpless patient lying down. The sensation of being suspended on four heads is one of anticipation, then as movement takes place, one of fear of being dropped with a bump on the ground three feet below. Every time one of the hammock-men falters or gives a sudden yell the fear increases a hundredfold and the faster the hammock men move and the more excited they get, the greater the fear. Add to this the jungle path, with its numerous roots and obstructions, the dread of your hammock-men dropping you and bolting at the first boom of an Ashanti gun, not to mention the misery and depression of the jungle path in torrential rain, and some idea may be formed of what these unfortunate patients had to go through.

My company, with its maxim gun with one hundred and fifty rounds per man and more in reserve, was drawn up on the main road in Beckwai. The first hammock carrying a patient was seen approaching. The advance guard went forward and both halted. Other hammocks followed in quick succession and took up their positions in rear. The medical staff and the rest of my company were distributed amongst them. There was also a rearguard. Within a few minutes officers turned up from every direction to say good-bye. Colonel Willcocks and his staff had a cheery good-bye for all. Among those in the hammocks, besides Lieutenant-Colonel Morland, were Major Beddoes, Lieutenants Edwards, Phillips, and Swabey, and a number of other officers and British N.C.O.s. Obtaining permission to move off and with a word to Colonel Morland, I ordered the column to march amidst much handshaking and good wishes.

The march soon developed into a crawl, the groans of the hammock men varying with the weight carried from a satisfied rhythm to a disjointed grunt.

We approached Dompuassi. Each hammock occupant was

informed that a halt would be made, while I sent forward my native Sergeant-Major with a strong patrol to ascertain that the place was clear of the enemy and no ambush awaiting us. An Ashanti Dane gun did boom out. It caused much alarm amongst the hammock men, and when the advance was again resumed there was a general feeling of relief that we had got through the dreaded Dompuassi without mishap.

The convoy halted at Kwisa for the night. Three days later we reached Prahsu. My duty was completed; the convoy continued on.

I bade them all farewell and had a final word with Colonel Morland. He thanked me and, in saying good-bye, remarked that my year would soon be up and that he hoped to see me in England.

I told him that would be some time yet, as I meant to see the campaign through and had promised E and D Companies to take them back to Northern Nigeria, where they came from, before I took my leave.

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

Retrospect—Prince Henry of Battenburg

PRAHSU, where the Nupe Company halted for the night, looked changed that August afternoon, and after settling down my men and having a meal in the Rest House, I filled my pipe and went out to have a stroll round. The weather had cleared and the sun for once had made its appearance. Since I had started from there on our desperate adventure three months ago, huts had been built, a regular little village of them laid out, and there was that air of neatness and cleanliness which reminded me of the same base camp in the expedition of 1896, four years previously.

Feeling tired and seeing a wooden seat under a large, shady tree, I sat down to enjoy my smoke. My thoughts wandered back four years. I glanced to my right to see the River Prah in flood, with its large ferry boat. Four years ago the river was much lower, with a bridge made of empty casks, wired together and anchored upstream. There were wire hawsers for hand-rails. How well I remembered halting on that bridge in charge of King Prempeh, the Queen-Mother, and the other prisoners, carried in hammocks and under a guard of Captain Cayley's* company, of my regiment. The other companies of the battalion were drawn up in quarter column on the river bank behind us, under command of Colonel A. J. Price, and among the officers was one who was destined to rise to the highest position in the British Army, Second-Lieutenant C. J. Deverell.† We wore our scarlet uniforms, the last occasion

* Major-General Sir Walter Cayley, K.C.M.G., C.B.

† Field-Marshal Sir Cyril Deverell, G.C.B., K.B.E., Colonel West Yorkshire Regiment.

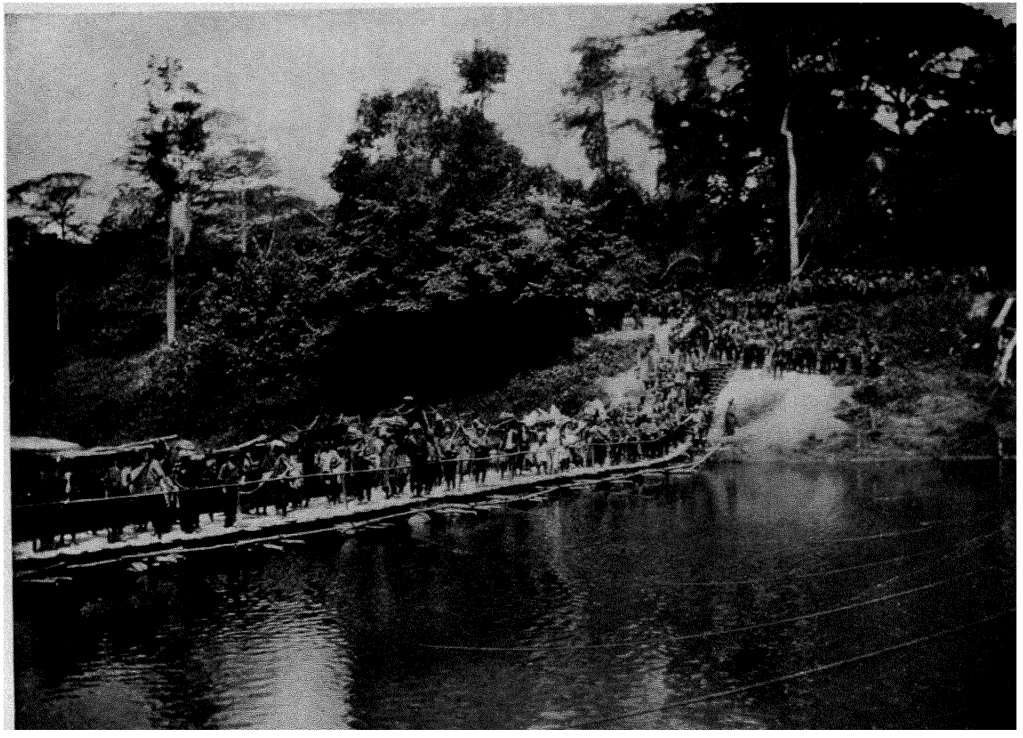
on which scarlet was worn by the British Army on active service, and with the background of dark green trees, with the yellow sand of the river-bank the contrast was most marked and picturesque.

The Rest House had not altered. In 1896 it was used for the Headquarters Staff on the way up, Sir Francis Scott and Prince Henry of Battenburg occupying the upper portion. It was there that Lieutenant-Colonel Belfield* had asked me to take pot luck with Headquarters, introducing me as one whom he had known since I was a boy in his regiment, which my father commanded. He said that my father was very much liked, had a good war service, and was a veteran of Lucknow, where he was on the staff of General Havelock and in charge of the mining operations during the siege. He also led a successful storming party for which he was mentioned in despatches.

I sat next to Prince Henry, whom I first met on board the transport *Manilla* when he came to see me about the two donkeys which I had taken charge of from Gibraltar, for him and Prince Christian to ride up to Kumasi, the first quadrupeds to be tried on the Gold Coast. We landed them in surf boats, where their arrival on the shore and their braying caused the greatest excitement amongst the populace, who had come to watch the ceremony.

During the meal Prince Henry discussed the Isle of Wight, of which he was Governor, where my parents were living and where I had been to school at Appuldurcombe, near Godshill. I was able to tell him how it came about that Empress Eugenie, on her escape from Paris during the Franco-Prussian war, when she was brought to Ryde from Dieppe by Sir John Burgoyne in his yacht *Gazelle*, had to wander about all night to find a night's shelter. Sir John's intention was to put her up in the house my grandfather had next to the Yacht Club, but he happened to have just died, and my aunt, who answered the door at midnight, told Sir John what had happened and he at once made for a hotel. As Empress Eugenie had no luggage

* Lieutenant-General Sir Herbert Belfield, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., K.B.E., D.S.O.



2nd West Yorkshire Regiment crossing the Prah
The author on centre of bridge outside handrail

they were refused at one hotel after another, until they tried the very last, the York, in George Street, where compassion was taken on them.

Prince Henry was interested, too, when I told him how his brother-in-law, the Duke of Edinburgh, had saved my father's life. The Duke was then in command of H.M.S. *Black Prince*, off Cyprus during its occupation by the British and Indian troops under Sir Garnet Wolseley in 1878. My father was stricken down with Cyprus fever, in hospital, and on the point of death. A telegram was despatched to Malta with the news, to be broken to my mother there in the following words: "Very ill, invalided but too ill to travel." The Duke and Duchess were close friends of my mother, who had frequently accompanied the Duke on the piano when he played the violin, and when he heard the news he acted without a moment's delay. He took my father on board the *Black Prince*, giving up his own cabin, and the ship took him to Malta where he was handed over to my mother and eventually recovered.

Six days after that luncheon I said good-bye to Prince Henry. It was a sad farewell.

My thoughts wandered on. I looked at a cotton tree near by. It was under this tree that the Press tent was pitched, used by world-wide war correspondents. Alas, not a single war correspondent on this campaign so far!

I got up from my meditations to prepare to leave Prahsu next morning for the return march to Beckwai. We escorted a convoy of food, ammunition, etc. and halted on the second night at Kwisa. There, too, a number of huts had sprung up and it was fast assuming the appearance of what it was like four years previously when, owing to its being at the top of the Moinsi hills and having a fairly salubrious atmosphere, an advance hospital had been established for that expedition.

I well remembered seeing poor Prince Henry leaving the Headquarters hut there in a hammock to return to the coast, stricken down with malarial fever. He was saying good-bye and making a brave effort to be cheerful. He spotted me and beckoned.

"I have to go back," he said. "They won't let me stay any longer."

We shook hands. How his fine handsome face had changed in those few days since our talk at Prahsu. The hammock-men moved on, accompanied by his English servant, George Butcher and Surgeon-Captain Hilliard in medical charge. My eyes followed that tall, handsome volunteer lying prone so soon after our happy reunion at Prahsu. Everyone admired him for his personal charm and for voluntarily sharing the hardships on an expedition in a country universally known as the white man's grave. He was not a professional soldier and all the more honour to him for his desire to serve Queen and country.

We heard the sad news of his death on board H.M.S. *Blonde* and of the sad home-coming. All the details of the memorial service, which I attended in 1897, came vividly back to me. I had been deputed to represent my regiment at this service to be held at Whippingham Church, near Osborne, Isle of Wight, where a side chapel in which his body had been placed had been constructed as a personal memorial by the Queen and was to be dedicated.

I arrived at Whippingham Station. The woman station-master, the first I had ever met, escorted me to my conveyance, and on entering the little village church so dear to the Royal Family I was ushered into the front pew, where a seat had been reserved for me amidst the Royal and distinguished personages. A few paces to my right front, in the choir, sat Her Majesty the Queen, in a low wooden armchair. She had entered by a side door. The service was beautiful but sad. I was with that tall, handsome figure as he had lived. I could not picture him dead. To his wife, family, and relatives it must have been heartbreaking. I shall never forget the simplicity of it all, its peace and beauty.

I remembered, too, hearing at Kwisa of the death at Prahsu of another gallant officer of that 1896 Expedition, poor Ferguson of the Royal Horse Guards.

There was a more permanent mark there, the grave of Private Walker of Captain Cayley's company of the West Yorkshire Regiment. I was glad to see that the Ashantis, after

our retirement from Kwisa in this campaign, had in no way disturbed it.

The march next morning was continued to Beckwai. No opposition was met with, but all the necessary precautions against attack had to be taken and one could not help noticing the marked fear exhibited by carriers new to the jungle and Ashanti. The mere idea of a possible ambush was as trying as the real thing. Over and over again, when near Dompuassi, the carriers faltered, and persuasion had to be used to induce them to go on in spite of assurances that all was clear. Many were still so nervous that had a shot rung out they would have instantly dropped their loads and stampeded.

On arrival at Beckwai and reporting myself, I was informed that I was to take over command of Esumeja again, that my company was to proceed there, and another officer would be attached for duty with it.

"You will be interested to hear," my informant told me, "that the Queen has conferred the honour of a knighthood on Colonel Willcocks." He showed me the telegram: "The Queen has been graciously pleased to approve of the promotion of Colonel James Willcocks, C.M.G., D.S.O., Commandant of the West African Frontier Force, to be a Knight Commander of the Most Distinguished Order of Saint Michael and Saint George in recognition of his services while in command of the expedition to Ashanti."

"I must congratulate Sir James," I said, and went in search of him.

"Hullo, Hall," he said, as I entered, "you are just the man I want. Go at once with your company to take over Esumeja. I will send you another officer. You will find the Sierra Leone Frontier Police and your 75-mm. gun there. I may reinforce you later. All the reports tend to show that there are still a number of Ashantis hanging about in the Kokofu area. You must keep me informed of their movements as it is quite impossible for me to move on to Kumasi until they are disposed of, and now that Colonel Burroughs has returned, I am sending off in a few days a couple of flying columns to clear them out. You must excuse me, Hall; I am very busy."

I attempted to offer my congratulations on his promotion and knighthood. He passed it over; so I took the hint and withdrew.

I then thought of Captain Haslewood, as I wished to hear about the second relief column in which he acted as Staff Officer to Colonel Burroughs. This was his second visit to Kumasi.

On finding him I inquired how he had got on.

"Very well indeed," he told me. "We picked up Melliss's company at Pekki and we had only one little scrap on the way to Kumasi, but on August 6th we had a real taste of an Ashanti defence of a stockade. Melliss took on one and Cobbe* the other. They were built during the siege and our intention was to destroy them. These two stockades were found to be held by Ashantis, for what reason I do not know, unless it was part of a plan to keep the stockades in existence for another siege of Kumasi when Colonel Willcocks moved and concentrated there with his blockhouse line of communications to Prahsu. Well, the stockades were attacked. We had a taste of what a single line of stockades could do. Imagine a series of these stockades at intervals, each held by a determined enemy. It brought home to me the absolute conviction that had your command gone into Kumasi, leaving the Ashanti army at Kokofu, we and the Governor's troops in our enforced withdrawal could not have lasted many miles."

Bidding Haslewood *au revoir* and moving off my company, I began to wonder what Sir James wrote about this second relief column. This is what he did telegraph to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, London:

Beckwai
Thursday, August 9th.

Sent August 4th flying column seven hundred and fifty soldiers under command of Lieutenant-Colonel Burroughs to reinforce detachment Kumasi, and with orders for destruction of stockades in neighbourhood of Kumasi. Burroughs went into Pekki road, carrying out orders very successfully, although owing to serious opposition regret to report numerous casualties. Flying column

* General Sir Alexander Cobbe, V.C., K.C.B., K.C.S.I., D.S.O.

arrived at Kumasi August 5th. One carrier killed in action, five severely wounded.

August 6th Burroughs sent out flying columns, three hundred native soldiers each, under the command of Major Melliss, West African Frontier Force, Major Cobbe, British Central African Regiment, to destroy two large stockades not far from fort.

Found that both the stockades were strongly held, but they were captured after a severe engagement culminating in charges with bayonet.

In Melliss's flying column following casualties reported: Major Melliss, Indian Staff Corps, Lieutenant Biss, 5th Battalion Duke of Cambridge's Own (Middlesex) Regiment, slightly wounded; Colour-Sergeant Foster, 2nd Battalion Devon Regiment, severely wounded; one native soldier killed in action, six severely wounded, five slightly wounded, all these West African Frontier Force.

In Cobbe's column following casualties reported: Major Cobbe, Indian Staff Corps, severely wounded; Colour-Sergeant Rose, West African Regiment, slightly wounded; amongst the Sikh Indian soldiers, one killed in action; one dangerously wounded, seven severely wounded, ten slightly wounded; and also British Central African Regiment, one man killed in action, eleven severely wounded, nine slightly wounded; and also one carrier killed in action, three wounded.

Colonel Burroughs same day made night attack on a large rebel camp on the Kumasi-Kokofu road one mile from fort. Attack completely successful, excellently carried out, enemy taken completely by surprise, rebel camp completely destroyed, as well as very large stockade guarding it.

Regret to report Lieutenant Greer, 3rd Battalion West India Regiment, attached for duty to West African Regiment, killed in action, and also two men slightly wounded.

Before the enemy could quit rebel camp flying column was on them, and they killed a large number, all with the bayonet and the sword. Rebel forces severely punished.

Flying column returned to Beckwai by way of Karsi, completely destroyed stockade.

No attack on flying column. In the course of these operations the number of killed is six, the wounded is sixty-three.

Among others Burroughs brings to notice Major Melliss, Indian Staff Corps; Major Cobbe, British Central African Regiment; Captain Margisson, 1st Battalion South Wales Borderers, British Central

African Regiment; Captain Lock, 1st Battalion Loyal North Lancashire Regiment, West African Regiment; Captain Merrick, Royal Artillery; Colour-Sergeant Foster, 2nd Battalion Devon Regiment, West African Frontier Force.

Colonel Burroughs has already more than once done very good work. I desire to bring his service to official notice.

WILLCOCKS.

CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

Queen Ashantuah's Great Coup

"THAT's what I wanted; we move to Kumasi at last!" exclaimed Sir James Willcocks at his Headquarters in Beckwai.

He had just received the information that the two columns under Lieutenant-Colonels Wilkinson and Henstock, sent out from Beckwai on August 14th and 15th to operate in the Kokofu country east of the main road to Kumasi, as far as Lake Busumakwe, had reached that place and throughout their search for the enemy had failed to find any trace of them.

What a relief it was to know, too, that the Ashanti Field Force could now move to Kumasi along the main road along which Lieutenant-Colonel Burrough's command had so recently marched back from Kumasi and reported all clear. This meant everything with the enormous number of carriers and the great accumulation of food, stores, and ammunition essential to carrying on the campaign from Kumasi. The alternative route via Pekki, hitherto used, was not only much longer, but in Sir James's own words "the worst paths and jungle troops ever marched in."

For days past Sir James Willcocks had been completing his plans for this concentration in Kumasi not only of the Field Force, but of the twelve thousand levies who were to follow up the advance in three columns. The left column consisted of the Denkeras, supported by D Company 1st W.A.F.F., under Captain Wright; the centre column of Insuaims supported by one Company Central African Regiment and Gold Coast Constabulary, under Major Cramer and the right column of Akims, supported by the Gold Coast Volunteers, under Captain Benson. These columns had already been set in motion and

their orders were to conform to the movements of the Field Force in their concentration at Kumasi.

At Esumeja I had taken over command, had got my intelligence service going again, and in view of my strong belief that Queen Ashantuah was not going to take her licking so easily was directing my energies to anticipating what she would do next.

It soon became apparent that something was up. Armed Ashantis were reported at Kokofu. I ordered a careful watch to be maintained, but in no way to attack or disturb them, so that their intentions could be ascertained. We discovered that under cover of darkness the large stockade and one of the war camps were being rebuilt. This was followed by a more startling discovery, that another large stockade and a new war camp were being constructed at Edjumun, three miles along the main road to Kumasi from Esumeja. Not since May 25th had Edjumun been occupied by the Ashantis when they abandoned that place to tempt my command on to Kumasi. This reoccupation of Edjumun and Kokofu could only have one meaning, that Queen Ashantuah had got news of the intended move to Kumasi and that she was laying the same trap for the advance of the Ashanti Field Force as she had laid for my command three months previously.

I lost no time in having an interview with Sir James, when I pointed out the position. He seemed surprised and not a little annoyed, and although he was inclined to doubt my yarn, as he called it, he said he would send a column to Kokofu again and send instructions to Lieutenant-Colonels Wilkinson and Henstock, whose columns had been searching for the enemy for the last eight days, to join forces and march on Edjumun. I was instructed to send a party and a maxim to show the new Beckwai column the way to Kokofu, and in orders at Esumeja that evening, August 22nd, the Sierra Leone Frontier Police, under Captain McKinnon, and its maxim gun, under Lieutenant G. Watson, were detailed for this duty.

The column from Beckwai duly arrived at 10 a.m. It was commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel Brake, D.S.O., with four companies of his regiment, the 2nd Battalion Central African

Regiment. Headed by the Sierra Leone Frontier Police it at once proceeded to Kokofu. The usual precautions of silence and alertness were observed. The burned village was reached. I listened intently; no enemy signal gun was heard, and after waiting for nearly half an hour I learned that Kokofu had been found deserted.

I went on and met Lieutenant-Colonel Brake. He was obviously disappointed at not having a show. He was quite satisfied, however, that the appearance of the place indicated the near presence of the Ashantis, but as his instructions were not to proceed beyond Kokofu, all he could do was to put his men on to destroy the rebuilt stockade, the size and length of which astonished him, and lay flat the large war camp, one of the five having been found to be rebuilt. I explained to him the situation which I believed the enemy intended to develop, and of which I had already informed Sir James Willcocks, and if Lieutenant-Colonel Brake confirmed my views that the Ashantis were somewhere in the immediate neighbourhood, as I was convinced they were, I urged him to press Sir James to allow him to return again next day to follow up this morning's work. I pointed out that after this morning's fiasco Sir James would be less inclined to listen to me than ever, "although," I added, "I think you will agree that the information you have obtained this morning is in itself a confirmation of what I told Sir James."

Lieutenant-Colonel Brake agreed with me and said: "You may count on my returning to-morrow," adding that in the meantime I was to try and locate where the enemy were and have the Sierra Leone Frontier Police ready at the same hour next morning.

That afternoon my native head of Intelligence came to report.

"Opoku," he began, "was too sharp for your new Colonel. He won't fight now unless he can win a big prize; he is only waiting for it and when it comes he will be ready."

I told him to explain himself.

"Well, sir," he went on, "Queen Ashantuah is at it again. She has got Opoku to do it and means to have a big fight this

time. They are going to kill your Big White Colonel and his soldiers on their way to Kumasi. Do warn him, sir."

"He knows it already, Interpreter. But where is Opoku now?"

"He sits waiting, sir, on the Ejissu road between Edjumun and Kokofu, and when the moment comes, will strike."

"He won't come back to Kokofu," I said, "we have destroyed his camp and stockade."

"Oh, yes, sir, Opoku knows the White Officer will think that and will come back."

"I don't think so; the new Colonel is coming back tomorrow. He will go to Dewtechi and tackle Opoku."

The following morning, August 24th, Colonel Brake's command arrived and proceeded to Dewtechi, which he captured, the Ashantis retreating in a north-easterly direction.

That same day the two columns, under Lieutenant-Colonels Wilkinson and Henstock, tackled Edjumun. They found it had only just been evacuated, the stockade and war camp were destroyed and the columns returned to Beckwai.

The following morning Colonel Sir James Willcocks sent this despatch to the Secretary of State for the Colonies.

Beckwai,
August 25th.

Two flying columns, under the command of Lieutenant-Colonels Wilkinson and Henstock, after ten days' very successful work, returned to Beckwai yesterday evening after clearing the whole of this country in an easterly direction as far as Lake Busumakwe.

Flying column, under command of Lieutenant-Colonel Brake, Central Africa Regiment, left yesterday morning in order to capture large town Dewtechi, six miles from Kokofu in a northerly direction.

Enemy's forces, commanded by rebel chief Opoku, completely defeated by bayonet charge. Following casualty reported: native soldier slightly wounded. Central Africa Regiment and Sierra Leone Police behaved well.

Enemy's forces moved northwards. Major Stansfield, 1st Battalion West India Regiment, Captain Gordon, 1st Battalion Gordon Highlanders, Central Africa Regiment, deserving of mention.

J. WILLCOCKS.

Sir James Willcocks breathed freely once more. All danger of any interference with his advance to Kumasi appeared to be passed; yet I was convinced that it was not so. My spy work had culminated in the definite news that Queen Ashantuah was at her own town Ejissu with practically the whole Ashanti army. She had successfully called upon the Ashantis to make one more effort. It was not difficult to guess what this effort would be. Ejissu, the fetish capital of Ashanti, was two days' march from Esumeja and north-east of it. Dewtechi was on the way and connected up to Edjumun and Kokofu. The situation was such that, if the advance to Kumasi was made without first dealing with Queen Ashantuah, she had two courses open to her of winning the war.

I, therefore, felt it my duty to place the position before Sir James, and on being informed that I was to remain in command at Esumeja, I lost no time in proceeding to Beckwai and seeking an interview with him.

"I hear, sir," I said, "that you are moving to Kumasi and I am to carry on at Esumeja and Beckwai to be denuded of all troops."

"That is so; I am very anxious to get on. Beckwai is very unhealthy, the invaliding rate is very high, and as the lines of communication are all clear now we are off."

"But what about Queen Ashantuah, sir?"

"You know, Hall, she has had a smashing and is finished with."

"Not a bit, sir, she will come back again. She may even go for you on your march to Kumasi."

"What are you driving at?"

I explained everything. Colonel Sir James Willcocks took up his map and opened it. He pointed his finger at Ejissu.

"Good heavens, man, it is north-east of Kumasi. I can deal with her when I get to Kumasi."

Then in another vein Sir James added: "Thanks for the information, all the same."

He then remained silent. I saw he was not a little annoyed and withdrew.

From another part of Beckwai I suddenly heard a voice calling me. It was Captain Haslewood.

"Come and have a look at these cuttings of the English papers about the Governor breaking out. Here is Sir James's pledge that he would 'personally relieve Kumasi by July 15th under any circumstances,' read out to both Houses of Parliament by the Earl of Selborne and Mr. Chamberlain."

Captain Haslewood took up another cutting.

"This is Governor Hodgson's telegram to the Secretary of State three days after he broke out of Kumasi on June 23rd. 'Have the honour to inform you that in consequence of column for relief not arriving——'"

"Awkward, Haslewood," I broke in; "I shall be blamed for this. You know Sir James sent me the written order: 'Advance, make the attempt.' I did not carry out that order."

"No, no; he ordered you to save the women and children. You have done this in the only way that it was possible. Remember, when you received that order you had only one hundred and thirty-six men, including wounded and sick. What difference would it have made to the Governor's escape whether he had six hundred or seven hundred soldiers, but it did make all the difference to them having this hundred at Esumeja and keeping practically the whole of the Ashanti army away."

"I hope others will see it in this light," I said; "but someone is sure to be blamed. Never mind, another crisis is on. I am afraid Sir James does not see eye to eye with me. Queen Ashantuah is at it again. I am convinced if she does not go for you on your march to Kumasi, she will certainly go for the twelve thousand levies behind your advance, and follow you up to Kumasi. You know what that means. That can only be stopped by going for her at Ejissu. Do try and get Sir James to tackle her first."

"Good heavens, no wonder Sir James is upset! We have had two Ashanti envoys* here to say they are not going to fight any more, but want peace."

"That old she-devil!" I remarked. "Queen Ashantuah would be up to anything."

* These envoys were painted and clothed from head to foot in white and presented a weird appearance on their approach at Beckwai.

"Yes, and I am out of it; have to go back to Accra."

The first indication I got of the forward movement to Kumasi was the arrival at Esumeja of a detachment of 3rd W.A.F.F. with one 7-pounder and one rocket tube. My instructions brought by them were to send to Beckwai the Sierra Leone Frontier Police with their maxim and the 75-mm. gun with all its ammunition. I was, however, to retain the company of the West African Regiment in addition to E Company 1st W.A.F.F. I was further instructed to fire three rockets at 8 p.m. that same night, August 26th, and to maintain a lookout party from 7 to 9 p.m. for signals from Kumasi.

The recommencement of signalling after a lapse of three weeks, this time in the reverse direction, we to have the rockets, was a notification to Kumasi of the intended advance.

The removal of the Sierra Leone Frontier Police and the 75-mm. gun was puzzling. They could not be going to Kumasi by the direct route, otherwise they would be picked up at Esumeja. There must be a change of plan. What was it?

On the evening of August 27th we learned that the plan of a great flank march to Kumasi via Pekki was to start next morning, and was to be protected by a strong fighting column leaving for Kumasi via Esumeja the following day. "The worst paths and jungle troops ever marched," had after all to be taken for this flank march with the great quantity of stores, food, and ammunition. Sir James had indeed accepted Queen Ashantuah's challenge, and we at Esumeja ought to have a look in, too.

Next day, August 28th, while the flanking movement towards Pekki was going on, I had our patrols and scouts well out. Every report agreed as to the complete absence of Ashantis everywhere. Even the old people left in villages significantly pointed their fingers towards the north-east. Were they coming? How we watched for them that night and early morning. The fighting column was approaching from Beckwai. Queen Ashantuah was not in position. It was clear that the column would pass to Kumasi unmolested.

There was no doubt now that Queen Ashantuah was playing for her second chance, the great coup—the twelve thousand levies, the general uprising and the investment in Kumasi of

the Ashanti Field Force. I would plead once more with Sir James, as he passed through, to divert his command to Ejissu. It was his last chance of saving himself.

Hearing the column was arriving I left the Rest House and village to meet it. Imagine my surprise when I recognized the Sierra Leone Police coming towards me. They were going to Kumasi after all, and for the second time to lead a fighting column there. Well done, my Sierra Leone Frontier Police. They marched rapidly past. I recognized Sergeant Griggs with the 75-mm. gun and saw several officers approaching. I called out: "Is Colonel Sir James Willcocks with the column?"

"No," came a voice. "He leaves to-morrow via Pekki. He is going that way and we, a big fighting column, are going to Kokofu."

"Kokofu," I gasped. "Why, it's deserted!" I ran after them and repeated it.

"Yes, we know that; we are going on to smash Queen Ashantuah at Ejissu."

"You are pulling my leg."

"No, we are not. We are over nine hundred strong, with three guns and six maxims. Lieutenant-Colonel Brake is in command, with Captain Reeves and Captain Bryan as Staff Officers. You won't be worried with Queen Ashantuah much longer."

By this time we had reached Esumeja and sure enough the head of the column was following the Kokofu path. There could be no doubt about it now. I could hardly believe it. On the troops came, a never-ending human serpent. I watched them intently, company after company, Central African Regiment, West African Frontier Force, gun after gun, maxim after maxim, pioneers, medical units, supply units, hammock-bearers, ammunition columns, baggage columns, and the rear-guard. They passed along. They had cleared the village. The path began to show, the men to diminish, and then a bend and they were gone. God-speed to them in the coming fight. My responsibilities at Esumeja were now over; four months of them!

I was soon to learn the reason for this change to Ejissu.

After the departure from Beckwai of the flanking column for Kumasi via Pekki, Sir James Willcocks received a communication from Captain Benson, the officer commanding the right column of native levies, supported by the Gold Coast Volunteers under Captain Wilcox, dated Odumassi, August 26th, reporting his intention to proceed in the direction of Kumasi and that he would encamp at Bohenkra on August 28th. That was the very day Sir James received the letter.

On opening his map he saw that Bohenkra* was on the direct road to Kumasi, and if Captain Benson moved on from Bohenkra he would almost at once be commencing a flank march in front of Ejissu, a few miles north, and even if Captain Benson remained at Bohenkra he was only a few miles from Ejissu.

The question before Sir James was whether to believe what he had been told about Queen Ashantuah, and if so he must act at once. He immediately despatched an urgent letter to Captain Benson, warning him of his position and that a strong fighting column was being despatched from Beckwai early next morning, May 29th, to attack Ejissu, and if successful he was to follow up and join it.

Great were the rejoicings at Esumeja at the news of a great victory at Ejissu. It had been a most gallant and determined fight, the three guns and six maxims taking a terrible toll of the Ashantis, who resisted bravely for several hours, but eventually had to give way before our bayonet charges, and amidst ringing cheers Ejissu was captured, Queen Ashantuah and the remnants of her army escaping to Ofinsu. Poor Burton, of the Munster Fusiliers, was killed, and among the wounded was the commander of the column, Lieutenant-Colonel Brake, and alas! among the loot captured were the personal belongings of Captain Benson.

We were kept busy at Esumeja preparing the place for the reception and departure of convoys to and from the coast. We extended the telegraph line to Kumasi, and on September 6th, Kumasi was once more in telegraphic communication with the rest of the world.

* See map, page 244.

The first downcoming line of hammocks was seen approaching. There was a rush of officers to meet it. The hammock men stopped outside the new huts. Dr. Barker and his attendants were waiting there. They watched some get out and walk in, others they carried in. They all looked ill, many very, very ill. The patients—for they were a party of invalided and wounded officers from Kumasi—were nevertheless boisterous and cheerful.

"You seem to be having a happy time," I began.

"We are. The war is over, we shall be the first back in England."

"The war over," I exclaimed, "nonsense!"

"Yes," rang out a chorus of voices, "the Ashantis everywhere are putting their guns away and returning to their normal occupations. The chiefs around Kumasi are all honey now; there has not been a shot fired since Ejissu and to show you that we are not yarning, Queen Ashantuah sent in envoys yesterday to arrange about her surrender."

"But what about the personal belongings of Captain Benson?"

"Don't mention it, the damn native levies bolted after a short fight; we know no details."

"Sorry to hear this; how do the troops now pass the time in Kumasi?"

"Cleaning up the place and sham fights on the old stockades. They bring up the millimetre gun, blaze the stockade to pieces, the troops take to the bush on either side, a bugle sounds, a yell, a few broken shins, and the parade is over."

The patients laughed heartily, exclaiming: "We are jolly glad to be out of it all! What price a dinner at the Troc."

They were given our latest newspapers, made as comfortable as circumstances would permit, and we bade them farewell next morning *en route* for Kwisa.

Among the letters which came in that morning from Kumasi was one for myself from Sir James, inviting me to come up to Kumasi as his guest. It was a kindly thought. He wrote that the Campaign was virtually at an end, that D and E Companies would be the first to return to Nigeria, and he thought I might like to have a look round Kumasi. I gladly

accepted and asked if I might bring E Company to see the place, too, D Company having been already there. Colonel Willcocks assented, saying he was sending down another company to replace it, and that I should take the opportunity of escorting to Kumasi Captain Donald Stewart, C.M.G., the British Resident of Kumasi, who had been waiting to come up since July, and who would be arriving at Esumeja in the next few days.

It was on September 20th that we started off. We made a brave show, for Captain Donald Stewart had with him the Kings and chiefs, with their followers, who had come out from Kumasi with the Governor on June 23rd.

On arrival at Kumasi we were drawn up in front of the Fort and Sir James gave us a warm welcome. I was privileged to enjoy the hospitality of the Fort. I learned that Queen Ashantuah had not yet surrendered, but kings and chiefs were coming in fast, and what rebels were still in the field were operating to the north-west of Kumasi, and that the remaining area was to be taken over by Captain Donald Stewart to be administered by him, the north-west portion to remain a military controlled area until the rebels there were disposed of.

In the morning Sir James greeted me with the remark: "I have something interesting for you to do to-day. Captain Wilcox, with the remnants of his Gold Coast Volunteers defeated near Bohenkra, is somewhere near Juabin. Would you go out and fetch him in. I sent a column of four hundred under Major Reeve some days ago, but they were unsuccessful in finding him."

Off E Company started towards Juabin, due east of Kumasi. We were back in three days with Captain Wilcox and his remnants. It was a pitiable tale he had to tell me. He, as Adjutant of the Gold Coast Volunteers, with a strong contingent of them, had left Accra to join the Akim levies, raised and led by Captain Benson, Shropshire Light Infantry, which formed the right column of the general advance to Kumasi.

On August 27th, Captain Benson, with his whole force, camped for the night two miles short of Bohenkra. Next morning, in the full belief that there were no Ashantis nearer

than Kumasi, Captain Benson with a small bodyguard moved off in the direction of Bohenkra, leaving instructions for Captain Wilcox with the Gold Coast Volunteers and levies to follow. Within a mile of leaving camp Captain Benson's bodyguard was suddenly heavily attacked; three men were killed, several wounded, and Captain Benson fell back to rejoin Captain Wilcox.

A hasty defence was organized and the Ashantis opened a heavy fire on the levies, who were in close formation. The levies could not withstand this onslaught. They fell in hundreds. They became panic stricken. Their King was the first to bolt, followed by his war captain.

The retirement then began, and in the confusion everything was lost, the treasury containing £1,500, ammunition, stores, personal belongings, etc. Captain Benson made a desperate stand with the Gold Coast Volunteers and three loyal chiefs. These chiefs of Wanki, Asiakwa, and Bompata, two Englishmen, Messrs. Hammond and Hutchinson, and some of the non-commissioned officers of the Gold Coast Constabulary behaved splendidly but to no avail. This gallant little band gradually retired and succeeded in reaching Odumassi by midnight. Captain Benson, who was suffering from fever, halted at Odumassi and sent Captain Wilcox back to Abetifi to fetch up stores and medicines. On his return he found that Captain Benson, worn out by fever, worry, and anxiety had taken his own life. The Basel Mission had done all they could for him and gave him Christian burial. Captain Wilcox, with the remnants of his force, then came on to Juabin where I found them.

The villages through which we had passed all displayed the white flag. The villagers were most hospitable to our men and full advantage was taken to get at the facts. It appeared that Queen Ashantuah had detached a small force, on August 27th, to attack the right column and with her main body stood ready to intercept the centre and left columns of levies the moment the main advance to Kumasi was clear; then with the help of the Beckwais and Adansis to follow up to Kumasi and besiege it.

Consternation followed the news that the main advance

was coming direct for Ejissu. A hasty defence was prepared, but all in vain. Her original intention had been to attack the main advance at Edjumun, and if she did not defeat it, she at least expected to deal with it in the same manner as had been done with Captain Aplin's advance to Kumasi, when it will be remembered that he lost more than half his force in casualties, used up nearly all his ammunition, and had to abandon his field gun.

Queen Ashantuah's great coup had thus failed, and for the third time a major tragedy was averted.

CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

The Campaign Officially Ends

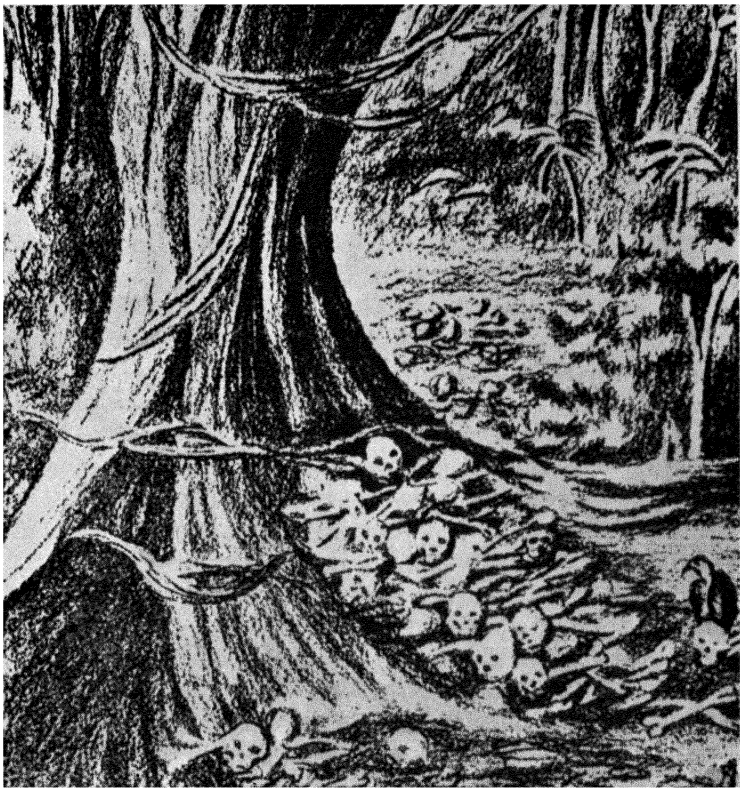
On our return to Kumasi, after our successful search for Captain Wilcox and the remnants of the Gold Coast Volunteers, I started off to fulfil my promise of showing my Nupe men something of Kumasi. It was an informal affair; the men grouped around me as I moved from place to place with my Senegalese Sergeant-Major by my side to amplify my scanty Nupe language.

We first did the Fort, which was built in 1896 directly after the occupation of Kumasi by the British Expeditionary Force. It commanded the whole of the native town, the only higher ground in its vicinity being that on which stood the Basel Mission buildings about one thousand yards from it.

The Fort, built of stone and brick, enclosed a space about fifty yards square, flanked at each corner by turrets. On each of these turrets was a platform upon which could be placed and worked a maxim or other gun, and each gun was protected by a roof raised on wooden supports; the space between the supports was filled in with shutters which could be easily pulled up towards the roof or, when there was rain, let down and fastened. The walls, twelve feet high, were loopholed. The Fort was entered by a single broad gateway secured by an iron folding door on either side of which was a guardroom, while behind these were two large rooms.

One ascended a flight of stone steps to five rooms around which ran a verandah, while still higher up was another single large room.

Inside the loopholed walls were platforms for manning purposes with lean-to sheds. In the centre of the courtyard was a large building, while in one corner was a well.



The Fetish Grove

I next showed the men where King Prempeh's Palace had stood and what happened there in 1896 when Baden-Powell's levies kept watch all night and a Company of the Special Service Corps, with Captain Donald Stewart the Political Officer, had to be sent to bring out King Prempeh, the Queen-Mother and chiefs to take part in the grand palaver with Governor Maxwell, which had already been kept waiting for an hour. A police station and native huts had replaced the Palace.

We inspected the Basel Mission buildings, much damaged, and the Wesleyan Mission House, entirely burnt to the ground.

The fetish grove was then visited—the place into which the bodies of those slain for human sacrifices were thrown. In 1896 the undergrowth was cut away and light was let into the whole of this once dark and gruesome place, where the ground had been strewn thick with thousands of human bones and skulls. These had all been collected and buried, in a sense covered up, but the rains being now on, the earth had sunk and some of the latent horrors of the place appeared in all their gruesomeness.

The Nupe soldiers stood in silence, no doubt thinking of their captured comrades at Kokofu, and followed me to the burial place of the Ashanti kings at Bantama. All traces of this had disappeared, but I had no difficulty in locating the spot where the fetish-tree, under which stood the large brass bowl, had been. The ground then was saturated and fetid with human blood, and the very roots were stained and impregnated with red corpuscles, as we found when we blew the tree up with gun cotton. The brass bowl, after the blowing up of the fetish-tree, was given to Major R. S. Baden-Powell, commanding Baden-Powell's scouts, who afterwards presented it to the Royal United Service Institution in London, where it now is.

Retracing our steps along the fine broad road, forty feet wide, I stopped at an open space and explained to the Nupe men the ceremony of King Prempeh's submission which took place there.

We then visited the two native settlements, the Fantis and the Mohammedans, passing to the cantonments, where we

saw the hospital, the European quarters, and the barracks, all showing signs of the recent fighting.

Dismissing the Nupe men to get ready for their return march to Esumeja, I entered the Fort to complete my preparations and learned that further Ashanti chiefs had surrendered, including the King of Adansi with whom I had made an agreement on May 20th, but not so far Queen Ashantuah. All the columns sent out, with the exception of the one under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Montenaro, had now returned, having reported meeting with no opposition.

On the parade-ground outside the Fort, the Nupe Company were drawn up ready to march off to Esumeja. Colonel Sir James Willcocks expressed a wish to address the men. It would probably be his last opportunity as it was his intention to sever his connection with West Africa and the West African Frontier Force and seek fresh laurels elsewhere. Calling the native Sergeant-major to his side to interpret his words, he told the men that as they and D Company were the first to come from Nigeria they would be the first to go back there, but when this would be he could not tell, but he hoped very soon. Then, pointing to the Fort, he gave them a detailed account of what the place looked like when he arrived there on that fateful afternoon of July 15th, the terrible state of the place, and the garrison in the last stages of exhaustion.

"It is to you men," he said, "D Company, the Lagos Hausas, and Sierra Leone Frontier Police that those men owe their lives, for if you had not done as you did it would have been impossible for me to have saved them."

After giving three cheers the Company moved off and later picked up Captain Wilcox with his remnants and escorted them back to Esumeja. There we found Major Ryde, W.I.R., in command. He had come up from Fumsu where he had been performing the duties of Commandant. The Nupe Company and I settled down to routine duties pending orders to move southward, while Captain Wilcox and his remnants proceeded on to the Coast.

Clearing operations from Kumasi were still going on. Queen Ashantuah was still in hiding, but the Achimas were known

to be slipping away quietly to their villages. It was therefore decided to send a strong column to Berekum, a hundred miles north-west of Kumasi, which country had remained loyal throughout the rebellion, in order to establish contact with a force of Gold Coast Constabulary stationed there. The march was to be made through a portion of the Achima country with a view to meting out punishment. The command of the Berekum column was given to Lieutenant-Colonel Montenaro, who a few days previously had returned to Kumasi in command of a column operating to the north and engaging the enemy in a fight in which Captain Stevenson, 1st W.A.F.F., met his death.

On the eve of the departure of the Berekum column, information was received that the Achimas had got wind of this move against them and had decided to oppose it. Colonel Sir James Willcocks at once cancelled the move of Lieutenant-Colonel Montenaro's column and organized a fighting column twelve hundred strong with three 12½-pounder guns, two 7-pounders, and several maxims. This was the opportunity Sir James and everyone else had been waiting for, and he decided to take the command in person. The Achimas, to the number of five thousand, were defeated on September 30th, with a loss on our side of five officers wounded, three native ranks killed, and 28 wounded. The Achimas fought bravely, admitting a hundred and fifty killed and four hundred wounded. Major Melliss, in again leading a charge, was severely wounded, and it was this culminating act that won for him the coveted Victoria Cross, the second given for this Campaign, the first having been awarded to Colour-Sergeant Mackenzie, of D Company 1st W.A.F.F. The action of Obassa ended the Campaign as far as fighting was concerned: not another shot was ever fired afterwards, although several columns were sent out on punitive work.

At Esumeja, during the month of October, the station was kept busy by the constant passing through of the invalided and new arrivals to take their places. The invaliding rate of the Europeans was very high throughout the Campaign; only a very few, indeed, of the original field force were not either

invalided or dead, and I found myself the only one of the original officers or British N.C.O.s now serving with the 1st W.A.F.F., all the rest being newcomers.

In the middle of October a modified form of amnesty was proclaimed, and on the 18th, the King of Beckwai, escorted by our troops, proceeded to Kumasi to receive an official reception from Colonel Sir James Willcocks, who personally wished to thank him for all that he had done. It was an interesting little ceremony, conducted with all the pomp and circumstances of native splendour, and the King returned to Beckwai very pleased with the welcome given to him.

Early in November I started with the Nupe Company on our return journey to the Coast. On arrival at Prahsu I received instructions to halt there for the present, as it was considered desirable to keep the W.A.F.F. a little longer in Ashanti since Queen Ashantuah and Kobina Cherri had not yet surrendered and search was being made for them.

My stay at Prahsu enabled me at last to write home and break my long silence. The first letter was to my father, dated Prahsu, November 17th:

"I don't know what you must think of me for not writing as I know how you must be waiting to hear from me. You have been constantly in my mind and I have wondered what you were thinking of my reasons for not writing. I am afraid I was a bit superstitious and delayed writing, believing that so long as you did not hear from me you would know that I am all right and now that I have come back alive, I am making a start. I have had a bit of a trying time, but I thank God that I have come through.

"I have seen several papers and cuttings about the Campaign. It must have been a terrible disappointment to you to read in the papers and in many leading articles that your son had relieved Kumasi on May 26th, and was bringing the Governor back, when it afterwards turned out to be untrue. Well, Father, I thought of you going in with Havelock to save the women and children in Lucknow. I intended to be a worthy son of a worthy father and to make the attempt, hopeless as it seemed. The date stated in the papers was correct, and the



Photo. R. B. Redmayne

Kumasi thirty-eight years later. The Keeper of the Golden Stool, Nana Sir Ofori Atta, K.B.E.

official correspondence sent back by me left no doubt in their minds that I was going to make the attempt.

"May 26th was the day the Governor stated that if not relieved he would attempt to break out; a hopeless task, invested as he was by forty thousand armed Ashantis; so I moved heaven and earth to get my command up to help him. The position when we arrived at Cape Coast Castle could not have been worse. The last of the troops in the Gold Coast Colony had entered Kumasi; the rebellion was spreading by leaps and bounds and the Expeditionary Force, as I was then told, could not arrive for another three weeks. I could not sit down and wait; something had to be done, so I decided to impersonate the Expeditionary Force, with such success that we were able to secure Kwisa, one hundred and four miles from Cape Coast Castle, for the advance of the Expeditionary Force when it arrived. My bluffing tactics had succeeded beyond my wildest expectations. I will tell you more about it another time. It was at Prahsu that I received the terrible news that unless Kumasi was relieved in nine days there must be a tragedy. It was too awful to think of those white ladies, women and children, in the hands of those merciless Ashantis. Every one of my command responded magnificently to the call.

"In your march to Lucknow you had roads, bullock wagons, and ample transport. We had slippery paths with every conceivable form of obstruction, from a fallen tree twenty feet in circumference, to a gulley waist deep in water, and for transport everything had to be carried on the heads of a few terrified carriers during the torrential rains then proceeding. I wonder how your Highlanders would have fared carrying full equipment and over one thousand rounds of ammunition per man, for that is what my W.A.F.F. did.

"We had got to within fourteen miles of Kumasi when the wavering tribes began to consider joining the rebellion. It would take too long to tell you the whole story now, but I could not help comparing my position with that of Generals Havelock and Outram in their attempt to save those in the Residency at Lucknow during the Indian Mutiny, in which you

took such a prominent part. Like myself, Havelock was appealed to to save the women and children.

"At the time of the appeal, as you know, the Residency in Lucknow was held by a thousand* officers and men, consisting principally of the 32nd Light Infantry, now the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry, with two thousand non-combatants.* In our case there were in Kumasi seven hundred native soldiers with three hundred levies under twenty-one British officers and three thousand non-combatants. Havelock had to deal with eight to ten thousand native troops, who had mutinied from the garrison stations of Lucknow, Sitapur, and Fyzabad, and had besieged the British forces in the Residency at Lucknow. I had to deal not only with forty thousand already besieging Kumasi, but with an even larger number of wavering tribesmen. Havelock's problem was to enter the Residency against the Mutineers and bring out the besieged to safety against the same Mutineers. My problem was, if we succeeded in entering Kumasi, to fight our way out against more than double the numbers of rebels for a distance of one hundred and forty miles through dense jungle forest before safety could be reached. For our respective tasks, excluding the besieged troops, Havelock had two thousand long service British troops, with fifteen guns.† I had only three hundred and sixty-eight black soldiers of under three years' service, with five officers, four British N.C.O.s, and one gun.

"For six weeks Havelock held the Residency against the besieging mutineers, but could not get out. For six weeks my command, by staying outside Kumasi, not only held, but practically besieged the Ashanti army. General Sir Colin Campbell had to relieve Havelock and evacuate Lucknow, while we were able not only to cover the withdrawal of those in Kumasi and to save the Europeans of the Ashanti Goldfields, threatened by the rebels further south, but actually to help the Ashanti Field Force to come up. What is more the British

* The actual numbers were 982 officers and men and 1,280 non-combatants.

† Actual numbers, 2,400 officers and men with seventeen guns.

flag was never hauled down from Kumasi, as was done in Lucknow for four months.

"All this sounds a fairy tale, doesn't it, Father, but I can assure you it is what actually happened. You have probably read in the papers all about the Governor coming out, but must have been puzzled how it was done. You will never guess. You may call it a miracle if you like; it certainly seemed so."

I received a telegram from Kumasi, informing me that the Campaign was now at an end, the official date being November 25th, and that D and E Companys were to leave Cape Coast Castle by the steamer leaving for Forcados on December 14th. At Forcados we should be transferred to a river steamer for our journey to Jebba, our headquarters in Northern Nigeria.

I heard, too, that Sir James Willcocks and Staff were to leave Kumasi for England in the next few days and would receive an official welcome at Cape Coast Castle, for which purpose D and E Companies with others were to line the streets. Lieutenant-Colonel Burroughs had been appointed to take over command at Kumasi, the units to remain in addition to the local forces being the 1st W.A.R. and the 2nd C.A.R.

I lost no time in squaring up matters and completing the casualty rolls of my own Kumasi relief column. I found that out of three hundred and eighty-two men, one officer had been killed, four wounded, and one hundred and three native ranks killed and wounded.

The official welcome at Cape Coast Castle to Colonel Sir James Willcocks was a memorable one. The blue Atlantic Ocean and cloudless sky, with the multi-coloured garments of the native population who had turned out in their thousands, made the scene a striking one. It was with the greatest difficulty that the native police could clear the way for D and E Companies and the other troops that took part in lining the streets. A native band made its appearance, and when the time approached for the arrival of the cavalcade of hammocks the streets were a seething mass of excited and cheering humanity.

The cavalcade of hammocks was seen approaching, the marching escort in their striking red zouave jackets and the rhythm of the hammock boys arousing the crowd to a pitch

of great enthusiasm. The cavalcade stopped, the occupants stepped out and, headed by Sir James Willcocks, proceeded at a walk to move slowly foward. The cheering was deafening. D and E Companies presented arms, the band struck up, and with a salute the cavalcade passed on to receive the address of welcome and to participate in a round of festivities lasting for two days. This was to be followed by a similar reception at Accra, and further receptions at Las Palmas on the way home.



D and E Companies return to Jebba
The author is seen with his left arm raised

CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

Another Relief of Kumasi

ON arrival at Jebba in January 1901, we received a warm welcome from those who had been carrying on since our departure nine months previously. Our men were delighted at getting back again. Their three years' service, for which they had enlisted, was completed, back-pay and a war bonus were due, so that they were looking forward to returning to their villages, where they would no doubt talk of their adventures.

While discussing arrangements for my departure to England, I saw a native soldier standing at attention and saluting. He gave me a note from the Brigade Major, stating that the Commandant wished to see me. The matter was urgent.

I put on my sword and crossed the rocky ground to Headquarters. Colonel G. V. Kemball,* the new Commandant, was seated at his desk. He was with Colonel Willcocks when the latter received the urgent call to Ashanti and had been carrying on his work here ever since.

"I sent for you," Colonel Kemball began, "to ask a favour before you leave for England, and that is to help me about the time-expired men. They don't want to take on. Kontagora must be dealt with, their king is paralysing everything, so do see what you can do and have a talk with the men. It is imperative that I should have sufficient men to carry out these operations."

I promised to do my best. I learned that it had become imperative to deal with Kontagora without delay, if our position on the Niger was to be maintained. It had already been decided to deal with Kontagora after the operations against

* Major-General Sir George Kemball, K.C.M.G., C.B., D.S.O.

Dandegusu under my command, but it had to be postponed owing to the outbreak in Ashanti, during which the Fulani Empire became more threatening than ever, Kontagora, Bida, and even Illorin menacing Jebba itself. It had now become a question of fighting or giving up the Niger Territories.

I had the men paraded. I then dismissed those not time-expired and was struck how few they were. I saw at once how imperative it was that the time-expired men should take on; so with the aid of the regimental interpreters, I told the men the position in which we were placed, appealed to their patriotism, and gave them to next morning to think it over and then let me have their decision.

That same afternoon a deputation, headed by the native sergeant-major, came to see me. The men would be willing to take on if they could have their money and go home for a month's leave first. I pointed out that it would then be too late. The deputation then withdrew to consult with the men, and after mess that evening they returned to my bungalow with a fresh proposal. It was that they would take on if I would remain, too. This meant my committing myself for an indefinite period on my already considerably extended time limit, so I informed the deputation that I, too, would think it over and let them know on parade next day.

I consulted Colonel Kemball. It would be setting a splendid example to the men, but he could not think of asking me to stay on after the arduous campaign I had just been through and being so long overdue for leave. The regulations would not allow it. It must be a voluntary request on my part, and if I made it he would be very pleased to accept it.

The request was duly made, the men so informed; final arrangements were soon completed and the Expeditionary Force left Jebba for Kontagora and Bida, one hundred and thirty-five miles north and eighty miles east of Jebba, respectively. Colonel Kemball was in command, with Captain T. A. Cubitt,* Royal Artillery, as Chief Staff Officer, and Major O'Neill, R.A., in command of the Artillery.

My work at Jebba was, in addition to that of Base Com-

* General Sir Thomas Cubitt, K.C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O.

mandant, to take command of a mobile force to operate against any sympathetic action believed to be contemplated during the absence of the expedition, and to ensure the lines of communication being kept open.*

In Ashanti clearing-up operations were being continued, Captain Donald Stewart, C.M.G., the British Resident at Kumasi, reporting to the new Governor of the Gold Coast, Major Nathan, C.M.G., on January 14, 1901, that after the victory at Abuasu on September 30th, he decided to send out messengers to the rebel chiefs and to endeavour to get them to accept the terms offered to them by Her Majesty's Government. For this purpose he chose an influential Kumasi chief, who had been captured and was a prisoner in Kumasi, as the bearer. This man took his messages and a letter explaining the terms to the rebel chiefs, but he was unable to persuade them to come in and surrender. Captain Donald Stewart in his report writes:

"I fancy their principal objection was that nearly all had been mixed up in different murders of prisoners, and were afraid of the consequences; the message, however, did its good work, as the young men who were fighting under the chiefs' orders were informed that they would be safe as far as their lives were concerned for fighting against the British Government.

"As this news got spread about, so the chiefs' armed forces dwindled away, the young men deserting and returning to their villages at every opportunity, until the ringleaders could not muster fifty armed men between them. News was then brought to me that they were seeking assistance from the French, and that they proposed retiring into the Kingabo district. If this

* Major-General Sir George Kemball recorded:

"We required the services of every officer and man that we could by any means retain, on account of the expedition that I had to lead without delay.

"Major Hall had completed his tour in West Africa and had just been through a trying campaign, but he willingly agreed to remain on, although required only for duty at the base, and he induced his men, with whom he had great influence, to also stay on over their time.

"In so doing I consider that Major Hall not only showed a soldierly spirit, and a very valuable example, but also contributed to the success of the operations that took place in the field."

move had been carried out they would always have been a thorn in our side; so I held a meeting of all the loyal kings and chiefs I could collect, and explained to them the serious state of affairs, calling on them to give me every assistance in the capture of the rebel leaders. Orders were issued and four or five large armed parties proceeded to the district where the rebels were hiding, namely, in the dense forest of Ahafo.

"The whole country was cleverly surrounded and all roads guarded. This cordon was daily drawn closer and closer, until all the chiefs were located by hunters and then arrested by the different parties sent out; very few chiefs got away, and these I hope to arrest shortly; the work was most excellently carried out, and all the principal leaders are now prisoners in Kumasi prison."

His Excellency the Governor of the Gold Coast, Major Nathan, on receipt of this report proceeded to Kumasi to investigate for himself the causes of the rebellion.

On January 25th, Captain Donald Stewart completed his three lists of rebel prisoners to be dealt with and submitted them to His Excellency the Governor. The first list contained those that ought to be deported as a danger to the country, being the leaders and originators of the late rising. These numbered sixteen, including the two avengers, Kwami Elfilfa and Kwoku Nenchie, and Queen Ashantuah the leader of the insurrection. The second list consisted of those chiefs, numbering thirty-two, who joined in the rising and took a prominent part, but at the same time were more or less obliged to obey orders of those in the first list, and were, therefore, compelled to join or take the consequences of their disobedience. These were kept as prisoners and sentenced to ten years' penal servitude. The third list, numbering forty-seven chiefs, all minor ones, were released on pardon, conditional on their looking after the villages, roads, etc.

His Excellency the Governor confirmed all these sentences and the deported were sent off to the Seychelles, to join ex-King Prempeh and the ex-King of Kokofu.

It was not till March 19th that His Excellency the Governor was able to complete his investigations and report for sub-

mission to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Mr. Joseph Chamberlain. The following are extracts from his despatch, dated the Residency, Kumasi, March 19, 1901.*

"I should say that the real origin of the rising is a profound dislike on the part of the chiefs and leading people of Ashanti to British rule. This dislike is not unnatural. We take away from them all they care about and give them in place conditions of life which have no attractions to them. We have deprived them of the power of making war on each other and on neighbouring tribes, of the power of keeping their people in order by barbarous punishments and of the power of recruiting their labour with slaves. We try to give them protection from external aggression, peace within their own boundaries, law enforced by our own civilized methods, and opportunities of making wealth by labour. The Ashanti was perfectly able to protect himself from the aggression of the surrounding tribes before we came to his country, having for two hundred years prosecuted a series of successful wars against his neighbours, all the facts of which are well known to him. Peace within the country has no attractions to a man whose title to respect and whose recognized source of power and wealth are in feats of war. Humane punishments for offences and particularly for offences against the power and dignity of big men are to his mind ridiculous as well as unsatisfying to the pleasure he derives from seeing blood flow. Personal labour of any kind is beneath the dignity of the Ashanti and a wage which has to be slowly accumulated before it reaches a sum such as he could obtain from a day's loot in an enemy's town is no compensation for labour.

"I fear that the only things which European civilization have brought him which he really appreciates are spirits and powder. The chiefs like, no doubt, velvet and silks, but the use of these is confined by native custom to a comparatively few leading people. The toga which forms the sole dress of the bulk is rightly regarded by the ordinary Ashanti as superior when made of native cloth to when it is made of Manchester cotton.

* Quoted from Blue Book presented to both Houses of Parliament by command of His Majesty, April 1902.

Native custom as a rule restrains them from building any but the simple huts in which their race have always lived. It is true they like jewellery, but of this the big men have plenty made by native workmanship from their accumulated hordes of gold.

"A complicated system of administration, hallowed by antiquity and historic precedents, which our ignorance and policy have alike tended to break down, and a deep-rooted superstition, which we are unable to understand and from which our presence in the country has detached a proportion of the people, further help to make our rule distasteful to the Ashanti.

"I may incidentally summarize his character by saying that he is cruel, unmerciful to his enemies, disloyal to his friends, deceitful, suspicious, and intemperate. On the other hand, he is brave, dignified, respectful, commercially honest, clever, and obedient to the laws and orders he receives from an authority he recognizes.

"The principal instigators of the rising appear to have been the members of the native committee, Opoku Mensah, Kwami Elfilfa, and Kwoku Nenchie, of whom the first-named is dead. The military organization was mainly in the hands of Kofi Kofia, a chief of no great importance except by reason of his military capacity. Ya Ashantuah, the Queen-Mother of Ejissu, is said to have been made leader of the insurrection."

Hardly had His Excellency the Governor sent off this despatch and returned to the Gold Coast Colony when a serious mutiny broke out in Kumasi. The men of the 1st West African Regiment complained to their officers that they had not been treated fairly. They had been told that they would only be kept in Ashanti while the war lasted. It had been over four months, many of their officers had been allowed to go and they wished to know when they could go and have their back pay. It seemed to them that they were going to be kept at Kumasi indefinitely and their back pay withheld.

They decided to take the law into their own hands; so placing themselves under the command of the native sergeant-major, they fell in with their arms, ammunition, and rations,

marched out of Kumasi and proceeded all the way to Cape Coast Castle, where they encamped on the parade ground, behaving in a most orderly manner there and throughout the whole march.

The Governor of the Gold Coast happened to be visiting Cape Coast Castle and requested the mutineers to parade as he wished to see them. They duly assembled outside the gates of the Castle, when Lieutenant Watson, a powerfully built officer who had been with me at Esumeja, suddenly, under the pretence of dressing the ranks, seized the ringleader, the native sergeant-major, pushed him inside the gates, and closed them before the mutineers realized what had happened.

It was hoped the men would listen to reason, but they started along the beach to march to Sierra Leone. An attempt was made to turn them back, but they pushed on to Axim, where they were fired on by a gunboat and lost several killed. Then throwing off their uniforms, arms, equipment, ammunition, etc., they fled into the bush. The ringleader was taken outside the Castle gates and shot. Four hundred Gold Coast Constabulary were immediately ordered up from Accra to Kumasi, and with the two hundred and fifty already there shared with the Central African Regiment the responsibility of garrisoning Kumasi.

I was not a little perturbed. It was just a year previously that the Ashantis seized the opportunity to rise. Would they use this regrettable incident to do so again? They would argue that there were only the W.A.F.F. left to come to Ashanti, and these men would do what the W.A.R. had done, even if they ever came. Fortunately we had brought the Kontagora–Bida Campaign to a successful conclusion, and the time-expired native soldiers still held to the agreement made with myself. I felt confident that our men would answer any call. It came. Six hundred men started from Northern Nigeria to Kumasi. Lieutenant-Colonel Festing, D.S.O., was appointed to command this contingent. The first intimation that anything was wrong was the news that Kumasi had called for a thousand men to be despatched there at once. The British Resident there had sent this telegram to the Governor of the Gold Coast:

"Very urgent. There are rumours of future trouble from Ashantis. I have strong reasons for asking for further reinforcements of at least a thousand rank and file at once. If this is done as quickly as possible, all chance of further insurrection will be at an end."

The Governor of the Gold Coast did not consider there were grounds for very great anxiety, but telegraphed to Northern Nigeria for the six hundred men of the W.A.F.F.

On June 8th a proclamation was issued granting a general amnesty and pardon, with certain exceptions, to those who took part in the rising in 1900 against Her late Majesty the Queen.

Intrigues, however, broke out again. The loyal Kings of Mampon and Juabin were reported to have sworn fetish together; so Captain Donald Stewart, with five officers and four hundred men of the W.A.F.F. and Gold Coast Constabulary with four maxims, left Kumasi on August 5th to investigate for himself the truth of these allegations. He met with no opposition and came to the conclusion that it was a plot on the part of the Kumassis to have their revenge on these kings for not joining in the late rising, but as a precautionary measure he left Captain Haslewood, back again after leave to England, and one company of the Gold Coast Battalion as a garrison in Mampon with food and munitions for two months.

At home in England up to this period the services of the Ashanti Field Force had been recognized by honours and distinctions paid to its late Commander, Colonel Sir James Willcocks. He represented the military forces of West Africa at the funeral of Queen Victoria. He was commanded to attend the opening of King Edward VII's first Parliament on February 14, 1901, to hear the speech from the Throne, in which His Majesty expressed his high appreciation of the work of the Ashanti Field Force, so ably commanded by Colonel Sir James Willcocks and led by British officers. He was honoured by Liverpool Chamber of Commerce, Manchester invited him to a meeting, and he was made a life member of its Geographical Society; he was given the Honorary Freedom

of the Stationers' Company of London; in the Guildhall of London he was presented with the Freedom of the City and a gold sword of honour. He received a grant of money from the Gold Coast Colony. A complimentary dinner was got up in his honour at which three Cabinet Ministers were present. Mr. Joseph Chamberlain made a speech of which the following is an extract:

"When the country was engaged in a great war, when a large portion of our forces were away from Great Britain, when, in consequence, it was difficult at any rate to send reinforcements of white troops, an insurrection broke out in the heart of West Africa. It was, undoubtedly, the most serious rebellion with which we have ever had to deal in that part of the world. There was a great, a dominant, a courageous tribe of savages to whose gallantry you [Colonel Sir James Willcocks] have done full justice on many occasions—a tribe who had been accustomed to rule all the tribes in their neighbourhood, naturally proud of their great position, which had been humiliated by a conquest which had not involved any defeat, and who were therefore burning to avenge an injury which they thought they suffered. They took the opportunity—whether they knew our position or not I cannot say, though information seems to spread rapidly even in these barbarous countries—at all events they took the opportunity at a time when it was most inconvenient for us not merely because of our other engagements—but also because of the season of the year at which this outbreak took place.

"Well, that was a position which, if not dangerous, at all events, for a time was extremely serious. The Governor and a number of British subjects, including women and children, were shut up in Kumasi. We know something of the sufferings which they endured. We know how, at last, when the food was giving out, the greater portion of them broke away, and after undergoing extraordinary hardships reached the coast. They left behind a small minority who had to fight for their lives and their existence, and whose only hope was in you. A time was given for which they could hold out, and you engaged to relieve them at that time. You

kept your promise, I believe, to the day. And what that meant perhaps it seems superfluous to say to this meeting, but it is not superfluous to say to the larger audience represented by the Pressmen whom I see behind me. I am only a civilian, but I confess I cannot conceive any more difficult, more arduous, more disagreeable task. For days and weeks your force was toiling through an almost impenetrable forest, continuously in single file, with a brave but ferocious foe lurking in every bush, and what was worse even than that human foe, was an insiduous disease always waiting for its prey. With all these difficulties I hardly know which to admire most, the gallantry of the troops you commanded, the courage of your officers on whose leadership the whole machinery depended, or the cheerful endurance with which these hardships were borne. You carried out your work successfully. Your force was indeed, I believe, a force to which there is no parallel in the military history of this country. . . . And, Sir James Willcocks and gentlemen, it is because I believe you and the Ashanti Field Force have shown these great characteristics of a great governing race that I say, and say with all heartiness and sincerity, you have earned the gratitude of your countrymen and have deserved well of the Empire."

On the Gold Coast the railway was being extended into Ashanti with feverish energy, while Captain Donald Stewart was administering that protectorate with every care and caution, for the smouldering embers of another rising were ever present. The British Government acted, too. They decided to annex Ashanti to the British Dominions, and this was done by an order in council dated September 26, 1901, a separate administration being formed under the control of the Governor of the Gold Coast. This order in council, which may be described as the first constitution granted Ashanti, provides that the Governor, in issuing ordinances respecting the administration of justice, the raising of revenue, or any other matter, shall respect any native laws by which the civil relations of any chiefs, tribes, or populations are regulated, "except so far as they may be incompatible with British



Photo P. B. Redmayne

View of Kumasi in 1939

sovereignty or clearly injurious to the welfare of the natives themselves."

Experienced administrators of the newly created four provinces, under the leadership of Captain Donald Stewart, worked wonders, and by 1905, Mr. F. C. Fuller, who succeeded Sir Donald Stewart, K.C.M.G., was able to report that among the Ashanti suspicion of the "white man's" ulterior motives was speedily losing ground. The marked preference shown by the natives to resort to the civil and criminal courts established by the British demonstrated their faith in the impartial treatment awarded therein. Moreover, the maintenance of the tribal system and the support given to the lawful chiefs did much to win the confidence and respect of a people naturally suspicious, and mindful of their exiled king.

It was, however, the railway, the bicycle, the motor-lorry, and the schools which were making Ashanti. The railway from Sekondi on the coast to Kumasi, a distance of one hundred and sixty-eight miles, was opened on October 1, 1903. The bicycling habit became so popular with the Ashantis that by the end of 1913 practically every bush path throughout Ashanti had been converted and maintained by them to meet this new form of locomotion. For the transport to rail-head of an ever-increasing cocoa crop motor-lorries were introduced, and by the end of 1918 more than three hundred and eighty miles of roads suitable for motor traffic were available, most of which had been constructed by the tribes themselves under European supervision. Schools were established by Government at Kumasi and Sunyani to supplement the missionary schools, of which, in 1913, the Basel Mission alone had twenty-four.

The war-loving Ashantis were indeed turning over to trade, the cultivation of their land, education, and even Christianity, for all Ashantis are and always have been firm believers in a future existence. Who would have ever contemplated, after their action during the South African War, that the Ashantis would not take the next opportunity that presented itself to rebel again? Yet, when the opportunity came, during the Great War of 1914–18, their conduct can best be explained

in the words of the then Chief Commissioner of Ashanti, Mr., afterwards Sir, Francis Fuller, K.B.E., C.M.G., who, in his annual report for 1914, was able to record, "the unanimous and deep loyalty expressed by all the Ashanti chiefs towards their Sovereign and Government on the outbreak of war"; and so complete was the confidence felt in these sentiments that from August 1914 onward the Government of the Gold Coast was able almost totally to denude Ashanti of troops in order to despatch expeditionary forces to take part successively in the Togoland, Cameroon, and East African campaigns.

In these campaigns the West African Frontier Force, which since August 2, 1901, consisted of the Nigeria Regiment, the Gold Coast Regiment, the Sierra Leone Battalion, and the Gambia Company, totalling eight battalions with four batteries, played a glorious part.

In Togoland, on August 26, 1914, the German forces surrendered at Kamina to a combined Anglo-French force, after the Gold Coast Regiment had previously engaged the German forces at Agbeluvoe and Khra.

In the equally successful campaign in the Cameroons the West African Frontier Force again formed part of the Anglo-French Expeditionary Force, the Gold Coast Regiment distinguishing themselves at Duala and in other engagements, one of its officers, Lieutenant J. F. P. Butler gaining the Victoria Cross.

It was, however, in East Africa, 1916-18, that the full fighting qualities of the West African Frontier Force were recognized. The Gold Coast unit was the first to arrive at Kilindini, East Africa, and was at once sent up to the front line at Handeni to join General Smuts's troops. It distinguished itself in the attack and subsequent pursuit of General von Lettow-Vorbeck in German and Portuguese East Africa. A colonel of the Indian Army, in relating to me the events of this campaign, told me he was lost in admiration as he watched the Gold Coast Regiment storm and capture the German position.

On the return to Kumasi of this unit in August 1918, the War Office, much impressed too, asked for the formation of a Gold Coast Brigade for service with the Egyptian Expeditionary

Force; the conclusion of an armistice with Turkey, however, followed before the organization was completed.

With the termination of the Great War came honours and distinctions to many, but it was not until March 16, 1928, that the services of the West African Frontier Force were officially recognized by King George V, who was its Colonel-in-Chief, conferring the title "Royal."

To-day the Royal West African Frontier Force is, as of old, ready to answer the call of duty, and should the occasion ever again arise no limit can be foreseen of its powers of expansion, for it should be remembered that in Nigeria alone, where the Force was originally raised, the population from which these fine fighting men can be drawn now numbers one-third of our whole Colonial Empire. The continued existence of this force is indeed a fitting justification of General Sir James Willcocks's despatch on the action of Dandegusu in 1899, in which his concluding words were: "I am fast coming to the conclusion that most of these West Africans will make good soldiers if well trained by British officers and British N.C.O.s."

CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

Restoration of the Asantehene

SINCE 1896 Ashanti had been without a king. In that year Prempeh was deposed and taken as a prisoner to the coast fort of Elmina. How well I remember being given charge of him on the journey from Kumasi to Cape Coast Castle and handing him over with the other prisoners on the water's edge at Cape Coast Castle for embarkation on H.M.S. *Racoon* for conveyance to Elmina. Here is the description Mr. Musgrave gives of it in his book *To Kumassi with Scott.*

"On Febrary 4th, the West Yorkshire Regiment arrived at the coast with Prempeh and the other captives. The King and Queen-Mother had never left Kumasi before, and Prempeh especially seemed awed by the first sight of the mighty Ocean. The prisoners were at once put in surf boats and taken on board the *Racoon*, which weighed anchor for Elmina Castle, where the King will be kept in captivity.

"For some days thousands of natives had anxiously waited in eager expectancy, for a glimpse of that tyrant, whom they had dreaded so long. Men, women, and children flocked in from all adjacent coast towns and bush villages, and lay at night in long silent rows on the sea front or along the sides of the houses. As each day passed, their excitement seemed rather to increase than their ardour to be damped by the weariness and discomforts to be endured. Then their patience was rewarded. The strains of a band could be heard in the distance, the regular roll of the approaching drums was unmistakable—it was the white troops at last.

"Like a muffled roar did the cry travel from one end of the town to the other. 'Prempeh is coming! He comes! He

comes!' Thousands of people rushed in the direction of the Castle, and in a few seconds every inch of standing room was occupied by a black, seething mass of expectant faces.

"The regular tramp of marching feet drew nearer; there was the clash of arms as the entrance guard turned out and presented arms a murmur of a thousand voices speaking in hushed tones, succeeded by one fearful yell of triumph and hate as the litters with the prisoners came in sight. Again and again was the yell repeated drowning the loud tones of the band, which were re-echoing against the vaulted entrance to the Castle as the troops filed through into the courtyard. Small wonder that Prempeh was livid with fear, and trembling in every limb as he heard the furious cries, and saw the denunciatory gesticulations of the angry multitude that spread around him on every side. With fixed bayonets, his guard was formed strongly on either side, and had the wild passion of those frenzied people, kept back by the gleam of steel, been allowed full play, they would have wreaked a fearful vengeance on the unhappy occupants of the prisoners' litters.

"Once in the compound of the Castle there was little delay. The postern opening to the shore was flung back; the West Yorkshire Regiment sallied forth and lined down to the water's edge. Right along the seashore, over the sand hills, up among the wretched Fanti mud hovels, clustering round on the sacred surf-beaten mass of rocks forming the foundations of the Castle —there was the same sea of faces, and again did the frenzied cries and yells resound on all sides, as the prisoners issued forth, and passed down to the waiting surf boats.

"Up on the Castle battlements all the European residents were crowded—officers, Government officials, and traders. As those Ashantis stood trembling, cowed, and disheartened, looking one moment at the yelling crowd, then at the ever-rolling expanse of the vast Atlantic, a sight few of them had ever seen before, a thrill of pity must have gone through all the hearts of those white people there. But with those who had seen that king in his capital, the pity was only momentary. As a flash, all the horrors which lay at the door of those rulers came to one's mind. That fearful 'Golgotha,' the slaves, and

the terrible rites of human sacrifice: there was little room for pity; rather for thankfulness that the corrupt rule had come to an end at last; that Kumasi henceforth would not be a place to associate with deeds of cruelty and blood; and that in time, the thousands of Ashanti subjects would gain confidence, emerging from the cloud of a bloody fetish worship, to be taught a measure of self-respect by the presence of the English flag now floating over their head."

Never shall I forget this memorable scene at Cape Coast Castle. My heavy responsibility of looking after these prisoners for three weeks was over. Little did I ever imagine that four years later I should be landing on that same beach to take over a body of native troops, officially styled the Kumasi Relief Column, whose feat of arms was to be without parallel in our military history; yet its record was kept back and never revealed. Still less did I ever think, on my return to Cape Coast Castle from Kumasi with the remnants of my Kumasi Relief Column, en route for Northern Nigeria, that a year later I should be leaving Cape Coast Castle, a broken-hearted man, with my military career cut short and a life before me which no man could envy. Such is the irony of fate.

The embarkation of King Prempeh and the other prisoners completed, H.M.S. *Racoon* set steam for Elmina.

It was not till twenty-seven years afterwards, in 1923, that King Prempeh was permitted to return to Kumasi as a private citizen. He had become civilized, educated, and a devout Christian, wore European clothes, and was versed in European ways. His arrival at Kumasi was one of wonderment at the transformation that had taken place during his absence. He found it transformed from a squalid, ramshackle native township into an attractive and flourishing city, with broad streets and motor traffic, churches, public offices, banks, and other large business premises, schools, telephone exchange, railway station, an excellent water supply, and every modern luxury.

Two years previously, in 1921, a critical situation had arisen in Ashanti. The whole nation had become aware that the great Golden Stool, the soul of the Ashanti nation, had nearly a year previously been discovered, defiled, and mutilated and the



Photo: Exclusive News Agency

Ex-King Prempeh returns

secret had been kept from them. Feeling ran high, vengeance was demanded, but the tactful handling by the Chief Commissioner of Ashanti, afterwards Sir Charles Harper, K.B.E., C.M.G., gave to a delicate situation a happy ending.

It appeared that after the deportation of King Prempeh, Esubonten, a Christian and one of the most loyal and most respected chiefs in Ashanti, had succeeded to the charge of the king's household and treasury and by virtue of his office was in nominal charge of the Golden Stool. The actual custody of the Stool was in the hands of Kujo Danso, who had become headman of Abuabugya, in the proximity of which village the Golden Stool was buried.

This is Sir Charles Harper's own account of what occurred.*

"In August 1920, as part of a popular and enthusiastic programme of road construction, the local inhabitants under Government supervision were engaged in making a motor road on Esubonten's land between Abuabugya and a neighbouring village. In digging operations one of the villagers struck his pickaxe into a tin box. His cry of amazement brought others to his side, among them Kujo Danso, the headman.

"A single glance revealed to the horrified eyes of Danso that here lay the Golden Stool that ought to be in his safe keeping. He pressed the crowd back, but it was not until he told some story of a terrible and potent smallpox fetish buried there that he could induce them to retire reluctantly from the spot. He put some old men on guard, and sent to his village for a trunk, the box in which the Stool had been buried being rusted and falling to pieces. Into the trunk the Stool and its ornaments and insignia were packed, and at nightfall it was carried to Danso's house in Abuabugya. Danso sent for rum and made the old men 'drink fetish' that if any of them revealed what they had seen he should perish with all his family.

"Too frightened, it seems, to report the matter at once to Esubonten, his head-chief, Danso kept the Stool in his house, pondering what he should do with it. In a day or two there came on the scene the villain of the piece, Seniagya, a native of Abuabugya and by descent a stool-carrier. Having got wind

* *The Golden Stool of Ashanti*, by Sir Charles Harper (Blackwood).

of the discovery he went to Danso's house, gave him greetings as from Esubonten, and passed on into the room where the Stool was being kept. Danso and a friend who shared the house with him followed protesting.

" 'Is this," said Seniagya, kicking the trunk, 'where you keep the thing you dug out?'

"He then proceeded to explain that he had been sent by Esubonten to fetch the Stool for safe keeping. Danso, according to his own account, objected. Seniagya assured him that he, Seniagya, was Esubonten's best friend and thus the proper person to be sent for the Stool. 'After this,' says Danso, 'Seniagya took hold of the box and opened it—the box having no key. He spread on the floor one and a half yards of cloth and he took two gold bells, three gold skulls, and many other things. The only gold thing that was left in the box was the gold plate on the face of the Stool.'

"In the eyes of Seniagya 'the wood (i.e. the stool) is important, the gold is nothing.' So the gold bells, the gold masks, and all the other gold ornaments, after feeble expostulation on the part of Danso and his friend, Seniagya began to divide up among the three of them. As he was doing so a young man made an awkward appearance. 'As I stood quiet,' he says, 'Seniagya offered me some of the nuggets, which I refused because they were few. Seniagya said to me these were not things for young men, only the old men should have them. But after saying this he gave me more, which I kept.'

"But there were the old men who were in the secret and had 'drunk fetish.' They began to grow suspicious and inquisitive. Danso was 'tossed about' by them to explain what he had done with the Stool. Eventually the assistance of a certain chief was invoked and inquiries became more searching. Seniagya sent frantic messages to Danso and his friend and implored them even if they were flogged not to tell the truth. Then some ornaments, recognized as belonging to the Golden Stool, were seen on sale in a native market. The Kumasi chiefs soon became cognisant of the rumours and suspicions. They assumed charge and acted with decision. They arrested Seniagya and Esubonten, and sent out criers calling upon all who had received gold from

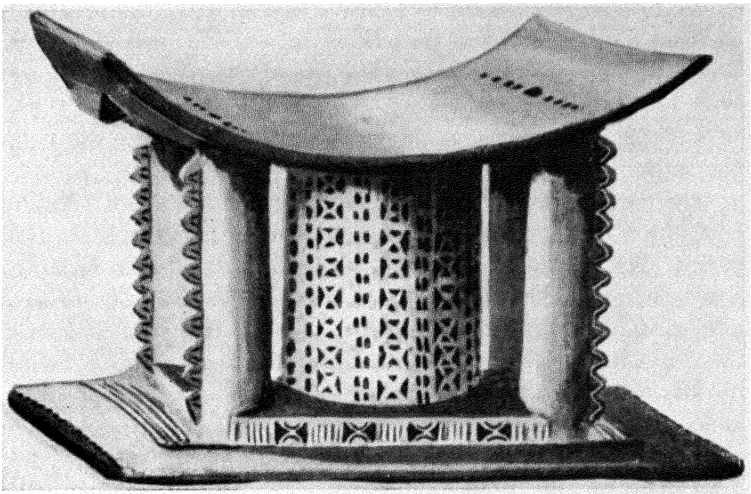


Photo : Exclusive News Agency

The Golden Stool

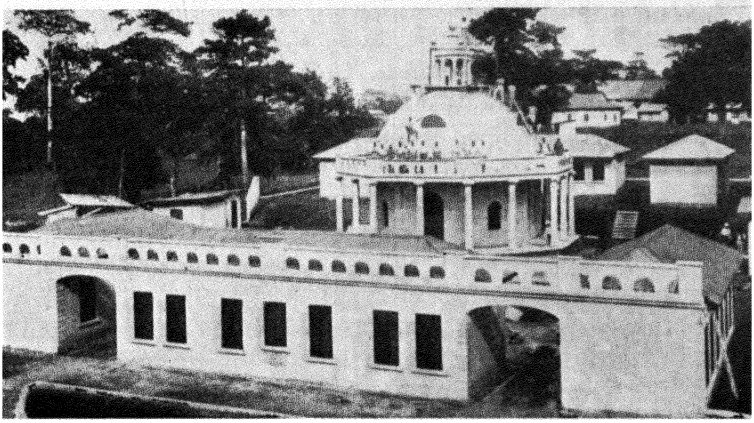


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Kumasi: The Mausoleum of King Prempeh I

Seniagya or his associates to surrender it to the chiefs. It then came out that the gold fetters which had been captured off the King of Denkera two hundred years ago had been pawned to a woman for thirty shillings, and that one of the gold bells made by Anotchi had been melted down and the gold, valued at fifty pounds, had been sold in small quantities to various persons."

The outcome of all this was the trial by the Ashanti chiefs themselves of the fourteen prisoners arrested by their orders in connection with the affair. Of these, six were sentenced to death, including Esubonten, and seven to imprisonment for life. These sentences were commuted by the Chief Commissioner to banishment in the case of those sentenced to death, five were discharged, and three ordered to drink fetish before the chiefs.

Six months later, the Governor of the Gold Coast, visiting Kumasi, congratulated the chiefs on the wise manner in which they had dealt with the affair of the Golden Stool and assured them that the Government made no claim to it and would help them to preserve the reverence and respect in which the nation held it. The Government would only interfere if the Stool became degraded into a bad fetish or if it was used for seditious purposes.

This assurance gave great satisfaction to the chiefs, and it was not without coincidence that eighteen months later King Prempeh was permitted to return. In a short while he was restored, not as Asantehene, King of Ashanti, but as Kumasihene, head-chief of his own people, the Kumassis.

It was during this period, in 1925, that H.R.H. the Duke of Windsor, then Prince of Wales, paid an official visit to Kumasi and while there opened the public park.

A few years later King Prempeh died, and with his death came the final test of Ashanti loyalty to the new order of things. Would the chiefs carry out the funeral custom of their ancient kings and that accorded to Prempeh's predecessor, or would they permit Christian burial? This would mean a great break with the past and no longer to carry out the great funeral rite of sacrificing fifty slaves to attend to the future wants of the

departed king. How would the Ashanti nation take it? It might rekindle their lust for blood, associated with these festivals and denied them by British rule, now that the opportunity had at last come to indulge once more in it. They could not help recalling bygone days when two blasts of the horn signified "Death! Death!"; three beats of the drum, "Cut it off!", and a single beat from another drum announced, "The head has dropped."

It was therefore with considerable trepidation that the funeral service and burial were carried out under the auspices of Christian missions. It was a most impressive service and passed off without incident. A great victory for Christianity had been won. In concluding the account of the proceedings the Stool Clerk wrote:

"Finally, God be thanked that during the period covered by the Custom nothing untoward arose to mar the various events and thus tarnish the fine reputation that Ashanti has in the eyes of the Government, as a result of prayers offered on behalf of the Funeral Custom by the local churches at the request of the Kumasihene."

Otumfo Osei Agyeman, born August 1893 and educated at the Methodist school in Kumasi, succeeded as Kumasihene.

The continued happy relations betwen the Ashantis and the British Government led, on January 31, 1935, to the re-establishment of the Ashanti Confederacy and, following precedent, the Kumasihene was appointed Asantehene and the first King of Ashanti under British rule. The following account of this ceremony appeared in *The Times*:

"To-day the fruits of peace are evident in the beauty and prosperity of Kumasi and in the flourishing cultivation of the land for miles around. Within thirty-three years there has been a change from savagery to civilization.

"An immense national gathering, estimated at over 50,000 people, assembled at Kumasi to witness the enstoolment of their Asantehene, Prempeh II. Kumasi, in the old days walled in by a high screen of almost impenetrable bush, is now surrounded on every side, for a space of about two miles, by open park-like country of undulating grassland. Very early on the

morning of the great ceremony distant drumming could be heard; chiefs from neighbouring villages were already marching in with their people. Special trains kept arriving during the night. To the steady beat of the drums and the intermittent whistling of locomotives was added at six o'clock the pealing of cathedral bells calling Christians to early Mass. Kumasi has indeed changed since 1900.

"By breakfast time the broad streets of the town were deserted. Thousands of Africans, in clothes of every colour and combination of colour, had formed up hours before along the road leading to the park which was named after the Prince of Wales when he visited Kumasi in 1925. The park is situated in a long valley, near the barracks and the old fort. Here thousands of Africans with their bright coloured garments formed a picturesque background to the scene. On the plain below chiefs and people had been waiting since six o'clock. Thirty-eight head-chiefs and about three hundred sub-chiefs, with over four hundred state umbrellas, a startling combination of colour, were drawn up in the ancient ceremonial horseshoe formation around an open space. Behind stood the crowd, packed as only Africans can pack together. At the open end of the horseshoe was the Governor's stand; two stands on either side were reserved for European and African spectators. On the left an African drum, intermittently beating, intensified the silence of fifty thousand expectant people.

"A company of the Royal West African Frontier Force marched on to the ground, escorting the colours, and formed facing the Governor's stand. A salute of seventeen guns was fired from the hill near the old fort to announce the approach of the Governor. Sir Arnold and Lady Hodson drove up with a guard of eight mounted lancers, in their picturesque green and red uniforms, four cantering in front and four behind the car. The assembly stood to attention while the band of the R.W.A.F.F. played the first bars of the National Anthem. After inspecting the troops and taking the salute, the Governor visited the chiefs accompanied by the Chief Commissioner and a number of officials. His progress round the open space could be followed by observing the large umbrella, coloured in blue

and gold with a red fringe, which was carried behind him. Drums now began to beat, answering each other from distant parts of the ground.

"Prempeh II occupied a position at the central point of the horseshoe. At a distance little could be distinguished except a denser crowd of Africans and a closer formation of umbrellas larger and more varied in colouring. When the Governor had finished the first part of the programme, the return visit of the chiefs began at once. First, however, came about two hundred representatives of the Mohammedans from Nigeria and the Northern Territories. A few of the leading men advanced, putting off their sandals, and shook hands with the Governor. In the meanwhile the procession of visiting chiefs had begun. Only the head-chiefs shook hands, the others halting and bowing.

"The scene, with its vivid colour, left a general impression of twirling umbrellas, of the black muscular figures of the sword-bearers dancing backwards in front of their chief, holding the gold-cased hilts of the sword pointed towards him; the increasing agitation of the drummers; the strange shapes of gold-covered images, the chief's regalia, and the monotonous double note of the death horn. The bearer of the death horn follows immediately behind his chief. His instrument, which is made from an elephant's tusk, varies in length from eighteen inches to two feet or sometimes three feet and is of ancient manufacture. It used always to be adorned with human jaws, and many still retain this gruesome ornament. Through these horns dead enemies are supposed to speak.

"Then drums began to beat with renewed agitation, and from the far end of the ground Prempeh advanced with several hundred followers to pay his visit to the Governor, accompanied by a special guard carrying the famous Golden Stool. This venerable and venerated symbol of Ashanti unity is shown only on occasions of the greatest importance; all stood up in token of respect as it was carried by. The stool seemed to be about two feet in height and of equal breadth. Though not of solid gold, the metal covering is thick enough to make the stool extremely heavy to carry. Prempeh himself was magnificently



Photo: Central News

H.R.H. The Duke of Windsor (then Prince of Wales) holding a Levee in Kumasi, April 10, 1925

arrayed, and his golden ornaments were so heavy that he had to be helped up on to the steps to shake hands with the Governor.

"Prempeh's procession was about three hundred to four hundred yards long and included between twenty and thirty state umbrellas. His drummers beat the Ashanti welcome, and forty horn-blowers followed, standing for a full minute before the Governor's stand, blowing a formidable blast which drowned every other sound. Prempeh's followers carried on their heads a most astonishing variety of objects, some of them obviously part of ancestral loot. One man had slung over his shoulder a Martini-Henry rifle, evidently a treasured souvenir of the early Ashanti wars.

"Before the Golden Stool, which was closely guarded by tall, muscular warriors, two virgins were carried shoulder high in token of the purity of the Stool. They were children about ten to twelve years old, scantily clothed and wearing finely worked gold ornaments. To describe adequately every detail of Prempeh's procession would require a profound knowledge of folklore and native custom. Every gesture and emblem has a traditional meaning.

"When the Golden Stool had returned to its place at the far end of the arena, Nana Prempeh was escorted to the central microphone, where he read his address, expressing his grateful thanks for the restoration of his ancestral line in his own person and for the restoration of the Confederacy. Sir Arnold Hodson then went to the microphone. Immediately he had finished his speech the interpreter repeated his words in Twi. A booming roar of applause greeted his final announcement that his Majesty the King had been pleased to designate Prempeh II as the first Asantehene under British government. When the interpreter had finished, the Governor signed the Ordinances, and Nana Prempeh came forward with his sub-chiefs and took the oath of allegiance.

"In the final scene, when Prempeh advanced once again with all his chiefs and followers to swear the customary oaths, African enthusiasm broke out unrestrained and the programme no longer proceeded according to plan. Four or five large

umbrellas about fifty yards in front of the Governor's stand, hung round with cloth sheets, were being used as disrobing rooms. The Queen Mother and her attendant women came forward now robed in white, the ceremonial colour of joy and victory, dancing to the rythmic beat of the drums, the Queen Mother chanting the ceremonial song of welcome. Meanwhile Prempeh and his chiefs had discarded their heavy gold ornaments and rich cloths. The dance of the Asantehene is the highest demonstration of welcome and honour among the Ashanti people.

"Prempeh carried out his part of the ceremony with ease and grace. Stripped to the waist surrounded by a circle of warriors carrying broad-bladed golden-hilted swords, he danced slowly, with half-crouching circular movements, past the Governor's stand. The whole open space as far as the eye could see was now filled with leaping half-naked figures, shouting their war cries and blowing horns, some turning complete somersaults, others throwing shields high in the air with a twirling turn of the wrist, catching them again by the handle before they reached the ground. Yet at no moment did the wild noise and clamour and the frenzied dancing fail to move to the rhythm of the drums.

"It was a scene unparalleled in Ashanti history and lasted for just over four hours."

In the same year Prempeh II received the Silver Jubilee Medal of George V and on the Coronation of George VI, in 1937, Prempeh II not only received the Coronation Medal, but was created a Knight Commander of the British Empire.

How wonderful it all is! My own thoughts take me back to the fateful days of 1900 when Kumasi was calling for help and, in the words of Sir James Willcocks, "Help was then impossible." Yet while these words had hardly been uttered a miracle was being performed without parallel in our military history.

I cannot end this story, however, without admitting a personal regret that, by volunteering to remain on in 1901 beyond my already extended tour of service, I should have received on service a severe eye injury causing the permanent loss of sight



Photo : Exclusive News Agency

Wesleyan College, Kumasi

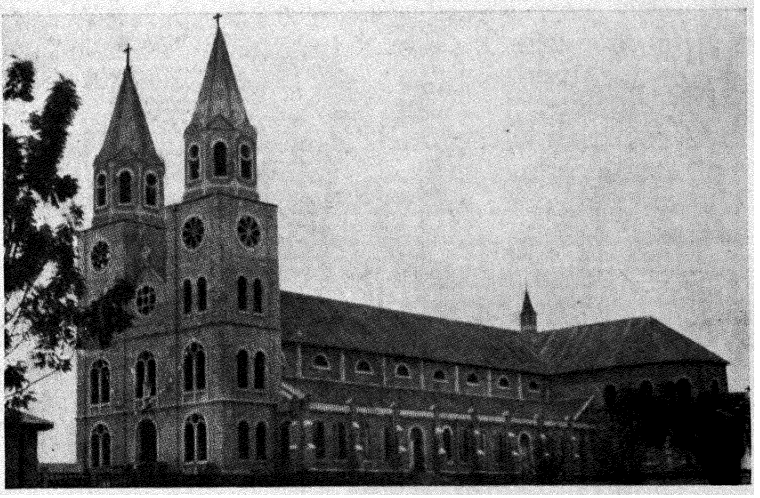


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St. Peter's Cathedral, Kumasi