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*War Office, Pall Mall,
15th July, 1873.*

MR. SECRETARY CARDWELL has received a Despatch and its Enclosures, of which the following are copies, addressed to him by Brevet Lieutenant-Colonel F. W. Festing, of the Royal Marine Artillery:—

*Head Quarters, the Castle of St. George
D'Elmina, West Coast of Africa,
18th June, 1873.*

SIR,

I HAVE the honour to report that on the arrival of Her Majesty's ship "Barracouta," with a force of 5 Officers and 104 men of the Royal Marine Artillery and Royal Marine Light Infantry, under my command, it was urgently considered necessary in the threatened state of affairs on the coast that this force should be immediately landed. The disembarkation, therefore, took place on the morning of Monday, the 9th instant, with every success, although from the violent state of the surf the greatest caution had to be exercised.

2. Upon my arrival at Cape Coast Castle, being Senior Military Officer on the Station, the command of the troops fell into my hands accordingly from the 9th instant.

3 From what I had learnt on the passage out, through the kindness of Lord Kimberley, concerning the state of affairs on this coast, and after communicating on the subject with His Excellency Colonel Harley, C.B., Administrator-in-Chief, in concert with Captain Fremantle, the Senior Naval Officer, the conclusion arrived at was that Elmina should be the base of operations, as it was, without doubt, assailed by the Ashantees.

4. Accordingly, on the 10th instant, we came to this place. I may here remark that the disturbed state of affairs was so great that it was then considered quite doubtful whether the road between Cape Coast Castle and Elmina was open.

5. On our arrival, from information received, and which had been previously reported upon, we found that the inhabitants of the King's quarter of the town of Elmina (which is separated from the loyal portion by a river) were disaffected, and had acted treacherously towards us, by affording support to the Ashantees during their invasion, by supplying them with stores of various kinds. After having gone some little distance into the country to reconnoitre, we returned to Cape Coast Castle for the purpose of deliberating with the Administrator upon the advisability of disarming the inhabitants of the disloyal quarter of the town.

6. On the 12th instant His Excellency held a Legislative Council upon the subject, at which both Captain Fremantle and I were present. After due consultation it was unanimously decided that martial law should be proclaimed in the town of Elmina and surrounding districts entered by the Ashantees.

7. Upon this I left Cape Coast Castle, accompanied by a small force, by road at midnight with the document for proclamation of martial law.

8. Captain Fremantle and I had arranged our plans, which were to surround the disaffected quarter at daylight, and after putting the place under martial law, summon the people to deliver up their arms at the north gate of the Castle.

9. I arrived in the Castle before daylight, having had much less difficulty in crossing the Sweet River, which cuts the road between Cape Coast and Elmina (a distance of about eight miles) two miles from the latter place, than I had on my return journey from this place, when the depth of the water at the ford was so great that our party had to wade and swim.

10. At 5.30 on the morning of Friday, the 13th instant, the disaffected quarter was surrounded on the river side by boats from Her Majesty's ships, and on the land by a force of Houssas.

11. Martial law was proclaimed, and orders were issued to take all arms, but otherwise to molest no one, and to fire only on being attacked.

12. About 6 A.M. Captain Fremantle joined me in the Castle, and from that place we conducted the proceedings.

13. We issued proclamations to the people, and held two discussions at different times with the chiefs and head people, who came to meet us, and who evidently wished to do all in their power to persuade us to postpone our intentions by various modes of deception.

14. Before long we brought the matter to a crisis, by giving the people one hour to attend to our commands, or to have their town destroyed. This concession was attended by no more favourable results than before. Wishing to leave no stone unturned to invite them, if possible, to listen to reason, to become loyal and obedient people, we again deferred another half-hour, at the end of which time (about noon), no arms from that quarter having arrived, we opened fire with artillery all round the disaffected quarter, for the purpose of destroying the town. The town being in flames in several places, we discontinued our bombardment in about a quarter of an hour.