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War Office, November 18, 1873.

THE Secretary of State for War has received a Despatch and its Enclosures, of which the following are copies, from Major-General Sir Garnet Joseph Wolseley, C.B., K.C.M.G., Commanding the Troops on the Gold Coast:—

Cape Coast Castle,  
15th October, 1873.

SIR,

I HAVE the honour to inform you that a column, strength as per margin,\* marched yesterday from Elmina, under command of Lieutenant-Colonel Wood, V.C., and destroyed the disaffected villages of Essaman, Amquana, Akimfoo, and Ampenee.

I accompanied the column in order to make it plain to the natives that I am sent here, not only to administer the Government, but as a General Officer to command Her Majesty's troops, and that I intend personally to take part in all military operations.

I had resolved to destroy these villages, because I had for some time known that they were occupied by detachments of the Ashantee forces, and that their inhabitants were in league with the enemy. Our officers could not go to any distance from Elmina without being insulted and threatened with attack; and I had the best authority for knowing that the large force of Ashantees in camp at Mampon drew their supplies through these villages.

I had summoned their Chiefs to present themselves at Elmina. They, however, had not only refused to come, but sent insulting answers, to which they were prompted by the Ashantees at Mampon, who told them that the Ashantees were more courageous than the English; that the English would not dare to march into the bush to attack the villages; and that even should they do so, the Ashantees would come to the help of the Chiefs.

In order to surprise the villages, and prevent any reinforcements arriving from Mampon, I carefully spread false intelligence that I was about to move with a force in another direction on the night of the 13th, and I gave nearly two days for this news to reach the enemy. The ruse was entirely successful. There is every reason to believe the enemy were completely surprised, and

\* 29 Blue-jackets, with 1 7-pr. gun; 1 rocket trough; 20 Royal Marine Artillery; 129 Royal Marine Light Infantry; 205 2nd West India Regiment; 126 Houssas; 10 armed police; 80 axe-men; 270 carriers.

the distance from Mampon to Essaman made it impossible for the Ashantees to reinforce Essaman in time without previous warning.

As soon as I had decided on my plan, I invited the co-operation of the Senior Naval Officer, who held in readiness the Royal Marines and Blue-jackets above specified, and landed an officer and 40 Blue-jackets at Cape Coast, and an officer and 20 Blue-jackets at Elmina, to garrison those places during the temporary absence of the troops.

The detachment 2nd West India Regiment embarked on board Her Majesty's ship "Decoy" on the evening of the 13th, and I embarked with some of my Staff on board Her Majesty's ship "Barracouta," at 9 p.m. The Houssas were already at Elmina.

About 1 a.m., 14th, the "Barracouta" and "Decoy" steamed for Elmina Roads; and about 3 a.m. the disembarkation of the troops commenced. Owing, however, to the state of the tide and the heavy surf, the last of the Royal Marines were not landed till 5 a.m.

About 4.30 a.m. the advanced guard of Houssas had marched off; and the main body moved at a few minutes past 5.

About a quarter past 7 o'clock, after a march along a track which at times led us through swamp knee deep, and at times through high bush, we encountered the enemy in a dense bush at a short distance from the village of Essaman; and after a short action drove him in, employing shells and rockets to dislodge him from the village, which fell into our hands at 7.50 a.m. I caused the village to be destroyed.

A large quantity of powder was found, together with many guns, and some Ashantee war drums, indicating the presence of Ashantee Chiefs, and proving that our attack was a surprise.

A few dead bodies were found; but the nature of the bush renders all estimate either of the enemy's numbers or losses so conjectural that I prefer to make no attempt to define them.

Our own losses were small;\* but I deeply regret that our list of wounded includes my Chief Staff Officer, Colonel McNeill, V.C., C.M.G., whose temporary absence from the duties for which he is so efficient is a serious loss to the service at this time; and also Captain Fremantle, R.N., the Senior Naval Officer on the station, who was shot through the arm while superintending the artillery.

\* Return of Casualties enclosed.