

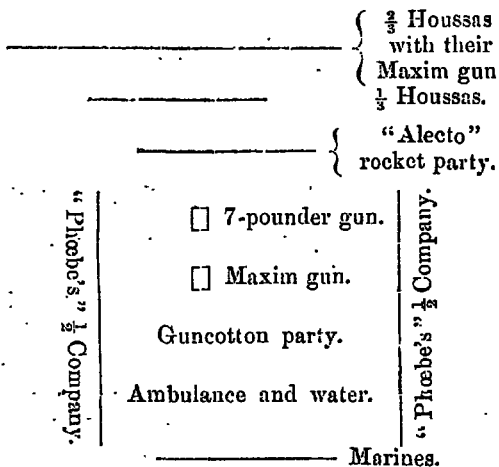
through the mangroves towards the stockade. A party of 25 Blue Jackets from Her Majesty's ship "Phœbe," under Lieutenant Hickley, were landed at the same point with orders to make a breastwork and form a rallying point for the Houssas under fire of the ships in case they were attacked and driven in by the enemy.

A practicable road for guns was made during the day for a distance of about 400 yards, and it was decided to land the whole of our force in the morning to take the stockade, and advance on Brohemie Town.

I knew we were close to the stockade, and from the best intelligence we could gather the houses began about 300 yards beyond it, and there we should find firm open ground suitable for working field guns on. During this day shell were fired into the town at intervals of a quarter of an hour, and this was continued during the night.

9. On Wednesday morning the entire force was landed, after the bush had been searched with shells and machine guns, and at 8.15 left the point and advanced on the stockade. From the very first the labour of advancing our 7-pounder and Maxim guns was very severe, the narrow-tyred wheels sinking into the mud up to their axles occasionally.

The plan of advance was as follows:—



At 8.50 the end of the road cut the previous day was reached, and the labourers were put on to cut the bush, while spies were sent out and a krooman climbed a tree to try and get information.

As the bush was cut the force continued to advance, and at 9.25 the spies reported a stockade about 250 yards distant with a creek in front.

At 9.45 a small creek having been crossed by means of planks, the 7-pounder "Alecto's" rocket tube and Houssas' Maxim fired into the position of the stockade.

9.49. Advanced and fired volleys into the stockade, and at ten took it and found it just deserted, fires burning and guns loaded.

23 guns, from 6- to 9-pounders, were found loaded with charges in neat bags, and a cane framework about 10 inches long full of scrap iron.

Some of the guns were on truck carriages, others on planks with rope and chain breechings well secured to the embrasures; the guns were spiked and dismantled and the powder put into the creek.

The stockade is a very strong one, and evidently the work of months: its total length is some 300 yards, the posts of ironwood two and three deep in places, and quite impervious to rifle fire. It commands the creek leading to the town and would have rendered an advance by boats disastrous.

10. The enemy now began firing from the town, the shot all falling in or near to the creek showing they had cotated on our advancing that way.

There was a great deal of unavoidable delay at this time in getting the guns up, the stockade having to be pulled down and a track made with the posts, the push too was now a good deal thicker and the advance was very slow.

11. At 1.45 the force arrived at a creek broader and deeper than any we had crossed before, and from here the houses were visible some 200 yards off; the Houssas and "Phœbe's" company waded through with their ammunition on their heads, while trees were cut down to make a bridge for the guns.

12. At 3.30 we were able to move on, and advanced on the houses, firing volleys into them before rushing them. Rockets and 7-pounder shell were fired into the town and set fire to some houses. The enemy's fire was getting warmer, and the Houssas became reluctant to advance, so I ordered Lieutenant Hickley to take the "Phœbe's" company to the front and take the houses, which he did at once.

The fire of the Houssas was now uncontrollable, in spite of the efforts of their officers, and, while in the houses, one of our men, T. J. Molyneux, A.B., was shot in the back, undoubtedly by them.

13. And now, instead of being on the hard ground that all our information promised, we found that each lot of houses was divided from the next by water, and that we were in a perfect network of creeks, with no appearance of hard ground anywhere. Another lot of houses was taken, and the next fired upon, but it was impossible to take the guns any further. The crews had worked magnificently, but they were utterly done, and there was no more water left.

Without guns and rockets it seemed impracticable to take the town, as we knew Nanna had plenty of guns, he was keeping up a heavy fire on us, he is known to have machine guns, and rifle bullets were passing over us all the time.

To stay where we were for the night was impossible, so as it was now nearly five o'clock there was nothing for it but to return to the ships, which we did leisurely in excellent order, "Phœbe's" Company under Lieutenant Hickley forming rear guard and keeping the enemy in check.

14. At Creek the guns crews were so exhausted that I very reluctantly gave orders for the 7-pounder to be spiked and, with its carriage and that of the Maxim, thrown into the creek; they could not have been got back to the ship in the dark, and the attempt would probably have led to heavy loss to the whole force, as the enemy were following us up. The Maxim gun was brought away and carried to the boats.

15. By 7.30 the whole force was embarked and the Houssas returned to Benin.

16. The casualties were as follows:—

Killed—1 Private, Housa.
Wounded—Captain Scafe, finger amputated, T. J. Molyneux, A.B., "Phœbe," dangerously.

17. To reduce Brohemie Town will require a force of at least 400 white men—300 to advance by land and 100 by water—well equipped with rockets and Maxims mounted on tripods. The country is impracticable for anything on wheels.

At present I am endeavouring to clear the people out of the town by shelling; the distance is about 2,000 yards, and as we hear they are very short of provisions we are patrolling the river to cut off all supplies of food going in.

18. I have telegraphed to the Commander-in-Chief for supplies of ammunition, and provisions, and additional ships, for the sooner the business can be concluded the sooner the ship can be removed from this unhealthy river.