

TO KUMASSI WITH SCOTT - CHAPTER VII

Over the Prah • Loathsome Diseases • The Native Levy
Flying Column to Bekwai • Akusirem • Fumsu • Braffu Eadru
Native Dishes • Long Pig Chop or Iguana • A Riot • The Adansis
Death of Major Ferguson • Snakes

ON JANUARY THE 6TH the Staff crossed the Prah, having, unfortunately, to leave Major Ferguson in hospital with fever. He was walking with Prince Henry on the previous evening, apparently in the best of health, but next day signs of a chill were manifest, fever supervened, and he had to be removed at once to hospital. Prince Henry also contracted a slight cold, but no serious symptoms set in, and he had quite recovered when the march was resumed.

Once across the Prah, the whole aspect changed as the road entered the gloom of the true African forest. The official "Great North Road" was little better than a narrow sheep track, even after the path had been widened by the levies. The exuberance of the vegetation is almost incredible, and the track each side was walled in by a tangled mass of leaves, branches, creepers, and tree trunks, while gigantic cotton trees towered far above the other giants of the forest. The earth itself is covered with a thick layer of fallen leaves, out of which spring masses of ferns, moss and creepers; above these are shrubs, and luxuriant undergrowth, while long sinuous stems and adnascent creepers twine and interlace with the branches above, festooning the path in a hundred different curves till an unbroken network is formed, over which the branches of higher trees intermingle and form a perfect leafy canopy.

Many of these creepers hung within five feet of the path, often making it necessary to stoop, while the carriers, whose heads were protected by their loads, pushed their way through with little thought of those behind, and any unsuspecting person who followed too closely had a full benefit when the stems rebounded. The tortuous turnings of the road, which winds like a serpent through the forest, greatly add to the distance "as the crow flies." Huge trees lay across the track and much hindered the carriers, while the path often led through particularly damp and musty places. Here and there a large swamp had to be traversed, but gangs of natives were hard at work making long strips of corduroy of logs lashed together with monkey rope, thus spanning the vile patches of black foetid mud.

The only breaks in the dense forest are the small clearings containing a few mud hovels. Atawasi Kwanta, a medium-sized village, had been visited by smallpox, so we passed through hurriedly and did not linger in the vicinity. This disease is very common, and makes terrible havoc among negroes, and both men and women are constantly met fearfully pitted. There are many loathsome diseases peculiar to West Africa, and disgusting sights have to be viewed daily. Children suffering from vile hereditary diseases; men and women with suppurating ulcers,

while at one village a woman, with nose and eyes completely eaten away, was pushed forward in full view of everyone. The poor creature was a horrible sight, and no one could repress an involuntary shudder at the disgusting object. Elephantiasis is also very common on the coast, and women may be frequently seen with one or both legs the size of a young elephant, and only just the tips of the toes showing from the festering mass. African leprosy is found in various forms, but is not particularly repulsive, though the victims are covered with white patches, which gradually spread.

A terrible pest among the niggers is the Guinea worm, which infests the pools. It is a long parasitic worm which burrows in the cellular tissue, especially of the legs, and causes the utmost distress. There is also the jigger or chigoe, a vile little insect, scarcely larger than a pin's head. It burrows under the skin of the foot and, luckily, soon makes its presence known by itching and pain. Woe to the man, white or black, who does not remove it at once with a sharp-pointed knife, for delay is disastrous. It speedily lays eggs, and a multitude of young follow the footsteps of their parent. When once the eggs are laid, it is difficult to remove all traces of the pest, and if it goes on unchecked the foot will rot away and mortify.

Tobiassi was reached at 10 a.m., and a strong stockade and rough sheds had been built near the village by the native levy. The rest camps were necessarily much rougher north of the Prah, and after Kwisá the advance party of natives under the Engineers could not be pushed forward ahead of the troops to construct camps in readiness. Beyond Tobiassi, the road was obstructed every few yards by huge trunks lying directly across the path, and the size of some of these may be judged by it being necessary, in some cases, to build rough steps to surmount the obstacles. The road goes across two narrow ravines, the ascents of these dips being steep and difficult; in fact, one of them was so near the perpendicular, that it would have been impossible to climb it had not the gnarled roots of the trees, laid bare in many places, given a secure foothold.

We reached Esiaman Kuma at midday, and though the village is small, the water supply was splendid and plantains very plentiful. This camp was also formed and stockaded by the native levy.

Prince Christian and Major Piggott had pushed forward to the outposts. The native levies were doing much useful work in the advance. They had been assembled under Major Baden-Powell at Cape Coast on December 16th, and consisted of 300 Krobos under Chief Malikoli, 100 Mumfords under Chief Crew, and a company of Elminas under Chief Ando, a fine old warrior who did good service as an ally in 1874. The Krobos are a fairly warlike tribe; but the Mumfords, though finely developed fishermen, have no great aptitude for war. At Prahsu they were joined by 100 Adansis who were very useful in scouting and gleaning information from the front. The pay of the levy was less than that of the carriers: sixpence a day, and threepence for subsistence, the latter sum being ample for the purchase of yams and plantains upon which they usually live. Some of the men had Sniders; many were armed only with the long Dane flint-lock guns; but this despised weapon can

do much execution in the bush, when loaded with a handful of buckshot or rough potleg.

With Major Baden-Powell was Captain Graham, 5th Lancers, and Captains Aplin, Middlemas, Houston, Mitchell and Green were with the Houssas. Major Gordon afterwards took command of the right flank. When the news arrived from Bekwai, it was evident that a sharp advance would be necessary to save the King from reprisals from Kumassi. There was little doubt that Prempeh would take speedy vengeance when he heard of the Bekwai chiefs treason, as his disaffection would be likely to spread among other Ashanti tribes, who were heartily sick of the constant wars and executions carried on by the despotic ring of chiefs in Kumassi. A small flying column was therefore at once organized and ordered to proceed from our outposts to the Bekwai capital, twenty miles distant. The column had with them supplies for a week and that involved the employment of a large force of unarmed carriers who could only march in single file through the bush.

At Essian Kwanta there was a strong picket of Ashantis, and as the only road led past their outposts they would have, probably, laid in ambush till the carriers came up, and then opened fire, which would have caused the greatest confusion in the native ranks. Major Baden-Powell therefore determined to make a forced night march past this outpost, and having gained his position, to attack the Ashantis with his armed force unencumbered with carriers. The column was made up of the levies and two companies of Houssas, great secrecy being observed as to the movements on hand. The troops fell in at nine o'clock and none of the natives knew of the operations till they were fallen in and furnished with ammunition, so there was no risk of chance traitors warning the Ashantis, a contingency always to be guarded against when dealing with negroes. The levies seemed fairly ready for a fight, and it was difficult to restrain the war-loving Houssas, ever spoiling for a brush with the Ashantis despite the odds. The march by a side path was difficult in the darkness, and the scouts in front had their suspicions aroused several times, and hurled suddenly lighted brands into the thicket, but all the draws proved blanks, and the little column reached Bekwai country safely, having now got in rear of the outpost on the main road. They halted at Heman, about half way to the Bekwai capital, and heard there that so far the King had not been attacked from Kumassi. After a brief rest the carriers and a company of Houssas resumed their march to the capital, while the remainder of the force marched down the main path to drive the Ashantis from Essian Kwanta. Officers and men alike eagerly pushed forward, but reached their destination only to find the wily Ashantis had made tracks. No doubt their scouts had visited the camp occupied by the troops the afternoon before, and finding to their dismay they were out-flanked, they did not wait long, but set off full pelt for Kumassi, leaving their smouldering fires as the only evidence of occupation.

The little force was disappointed to find their birds had flown; yet there was nothing for it but to turn back again and follow the remainder of the column to Bekwai. They were received there by the King and all his councillors, and the Bekwai monarch accepted the British flag, much relieved for his prompt succour; for

he had been in mortal fear of being captured and beheaded by Prempeh before the English arrived.

The King and a vast retinue assembled to receive the force. The Union Jack was tied to the flagstaff in a ball, and the King, advancing, pulled the halyard, unfurling the flag. The fifes and drums of the Houssas immediately struck up "God save the Queen," while the Bekwai monarch feigned sleep, saying that he would remain under the flag till he died. He then shook hands with the officers, pouring such effusive compliments on Major Baden-Powell's head, calling him friend, protector and deliverer, that the gallant Major blushed. The King finished the palaver by executing a few steps of the fetish dance for the edification of the assembled officers.

Next day they came to business, and then the dusky monarch at once showed real true African gratitude. He was asked, as a small return, if he would provide some of his subjects, who were idling in the villages, to form an armed levy, and others to act as carriers, for which they were all to be paid 1/- per day a head.

Ah, yes! He would provide the thousand fighting men asked for, but he could get no more for carriers. All right, send the thousand fighting men and we will use them as carriers; which were the more needed. He had not reckoned on this, and at once began a long yarn that they could not carry loads, and would also take a long time to collect and get ready. When, however, he was threatened with the withdrawal of the force, he soon came round, afterwards furnishing all the men first asked for.

Meantime, the main body was steadily moving up country. On January 7th, reveille sounded in camp at Esiaman Kuma at 4.30, and the whole place was soon a scene of bustle and confusion, till, everything ready, the Headquarter Staff moved off shortly after 5 a.m., for the longest march on the whole advance.

Progress at first was very slow, the path being narrow and washed away on one side into a rugged gully. It rose gradually, winding along the edge of a deep and thickly-wooded valley which was almost indistinguishable, so thick was the bush rising on all sides. The surroundings were very pleasant on this high ground, and the path beautifully dry. The forest resounded with the calls of birds, a clear prolonged cuckoo predominating, while gorgeous little sun-birds and cardinals flitted from tree to tree, and groups of parrots flew to and fro with hoarse cries. The track led through glorious scenery, and many splendid patches of plantains, with their enormous leaves of brilliant green, and clusters of fruit which form the staple food, not only of the natives, who roast them green as a substitute for bread, but also of the parrots and monkeys, who feed on the pulpy way-bread when ripe and yellow.

The road greatly improved as we reached the next camp, Fumsu, where the Special Service Corps had halted. The river Fum was very low, and the channel completely choked with large masses of rock. Crossing the bridge and again entering the bush, we found Colonel Stopford with his men in the woods in skirmishing order.



IN THE FOREST.

Passing through the long line of out-posts, we reached a very swampy district, the whole road reeking with the vile foetid vapour oozing from the sticky mass of rotting vegetation. Yet in these horrible marshes beautiful butterflies flutter round in myriads over the sea of mud; crane-flies and many brilliant little insects abound, while enormous dragon-flies, with their reticulated wings, gaily flit from pool to pool among all the steaming mugginess.

In some places the road was only made passable by the corded chain of logs thrown over, while in others the booted individual had the choice of wading knee deep across a strip of sticky morass, or "dashing" a carrier for the loan of his broad back, while his naked legs splashed through the mire. In this district, close to the village, one of Captain Donald Stewart's Houssa Escort, named Dawudu Moshi, was shot dead by an Ashanti ambush. The miscreants escaped in the forest, and there is little doubt that they were lying in wait to kill either Captain Stewart or Mr. Vroom, the District Commissioner; probably the latter gentleman, who had incurred the hate of the Ansahs and others in Kumassi, for the spirited action he had displayed, on various occasions, during the previous negotiations.

Leaving these swamps and passing through Braffo Eadru, the path became firmer and wider. The bush was much less dense, and the sun blazed down with terrific force on the road leading into Akusirem. A camp had been prepared here, and the Army Service Corps had pushed forward stores, and formed a supply depot in the village. However, the Lancet Correspondent, Dr. Cunninghame, who had

gone on ahead of the Staff, tested the water, and found it very bad, and close behind the village a large rotting patch of decaying plantains was also found. He immediately reported this to Surgeon-Colonel Taylor, who pushed on and inspected the place, which he found so unsatisfactory that the camp was condemned at once. For once, at any rate, one of the War Correspondents, opprobriously termed the "curse of modern Armies," has proved a blessing in disguise, as his report just arrived in time to prevent the Special Service Corps advancing to Akusirem, and the effect might have proved disastrous if they had been quartered in the camp. Instructions were given them to halt at Fumsu and march the two stages, a matter of sixteen miles, into Braffu Eadru on the following day.

Captain Benson, R.H.A., the popular commandant of the Artillery, was attacked with fever here and was seriously ill. Captain Curtiss had also succumbed to the ravages of malaria, which had attacked, more or less severely, those officers and men who were active in pushing forward supplies, or bridge building, camp making and laying the telegraph. They had all had long turns of arduous duty, and Africa requires a heavy penalty from those who over-work themselves, on her West Coast at least.

Luckily the weather was very favourable, being a particularly dry and hot season. Had there been rain, the dampness caused thereby would have brought a much larger amount of sickness in its train. There seemed every chance of getting the affair settled, and the troops back to the coast before the rains started, for death would stalk freely among the Europeans exposed during those wet months.

Malaria is a tricky thing, and it is attributed to half a dozen causes, which probably all, more or less, combine in producing it. The chief cause no doubt is the poison exhaling from the ground. The system becomes saturated with malaria, as it is inhaled at every breath, and everything reeks with it. No precautions will ward it off for ever, though they may do much in rendering the attacks less frequent; but carelessness will surely be fatal. It may be kept off for a time, perhaps several weeks, but it spares no man for long, and everyone in its sphere will be attacked sooner or later. A sudden chill or slight cold is just enough to bring it on. First cold pain, then frequent shiverings and burnings; the temperature flies up as the fever increases, delirium supervenes, and the life or death struggle begins. If the first attack prove slight, and a profuse perspiration relieves the fever, a second attack may be postponed for some time to come, but the awful chain of British graves right down to the coast, and the appalling mortality among white people, should be seriously reflected on by anyone who thinks of casting in his lot with darkest West Africa.

Quinine is supposed to be the only remedy for malaria, and is universally taken, but the effect of that alkaloid is harmful in many ways, though it has held supreme sway for want of a better substitute. This has now, however, been supplied by "Kreat Halviva," which entirely supersedes quinine in its therapeutic value, and has none of the baneful after-effects, as deafness, drumming in the head, lapses of memory, dizziness, and other well-known allies to cinchona bark. There were many officers and men who escaped the malaria, and attributed it to the fact of their taking

"Kreat Halviva," being high in their praise of the same. Many residents on the Gold Coast swear by it as a wonderful preventive, and I add these remarks at the risk of puffing the tonic, as the great question of antidotes is of vital importance to Europeans in malarious climes. This view has also been advocated by Surgeon General Sir W. Moore, K.C.E.I., Brigade-Surgeon Geo. Neates Hunter, and many other authorities on malaria who have had unusual opportunities of testing it.

The road from Akusirem to Sheramasi was very rough, with many big obstacles to block the way. In one place on the road a curious natural archway had been formed. A huge cotton tree, probably struck by lightning, had fallen from the bank right across the track, snapping in its fall a rather smaller tree of the same species, some twelve feet from the ground. The roots of the first tree rested on the bank, and the other end, lodging fairly on the stump of the second, was firmly fastened by yards of intertwining creeper, Nature thus forming a magnificent triumphal arch.

Passing on we reached the Kiribu river, a tributary to the Fum, and which flows in a straight silver streak through thick overhanging foliage, forming one of the loveliest pieces of tropical scenery to be seen on the road. Crossing the river the bush becomes singularly open on each side, and is only short scrub in many places, with a few higher trees here and there. This gave the sun full play, which proved the last straw that almost broke the camel's back. Everyone felt it severely, and after the long and fatiguing march Brafu Eadru proved a welcome sight. This village was quite deserted, as were the other villages on the road from the Prah. The people had removed themselves and all their belongings into the bush, and out of reach of pending hostilities.

The houses of these people, though of similar build, are far more substantial and cleaner than those on the other side of the Prah, and with a little judicious cleaning and disinfecting, they made very fair quarters, though in wet weather they would be hardly tenable. In many ways they resemble the houses of the ancient Romans of the first century, which may be seen in the remains of Pompeii and Herculaneum.

Outwardly, each house represents four houses, all standing corner to corner, enclosing a quadrangle with an entrance way in one corner. The walls are formed of wattle, smoothly plastered with mud, or rather clay, and the roofs thatched. Inside the courtyard you find the houses have outer walls only, and the sides facing the enclosure are left open. The lower half of the walls is stuccoed with a brilliant red clay which dries in the sun a smooth glazed surface. This clay was used by the troops to coat their helmets and straps in place of pipe clay. On the straps, especially, it looked well, and at a little distance, the equipment thus treated had the appearance of highly polished tan leather.

The roofs of these places were infested with lizards and other mere loathsome creatures that occasionally dropped squarely on a sleeping face; but the dwellings were airy, and yet kept off the dew. The mud floor also, being smoothed and hardened, and often raised a few inches from the ground, made a safe, if hard, spot

to lay our blankets and sleep in peace, even though the improvised pillow consisted of a box of ammunition or case of meat.

Wandering in the vicinity of the village, I came across a few suspicious bundles tied in dried palm leaves and laid across a frame-work of bamboo. This place formed a sort of necropolis for defunct chiefs; but such a method of disposing of dead bodies, chiefs or no chiefs, cannot be recommended, though these corpses were as dried and shrivelled as any Egyptian mummy. As interment in the ordinary way is usually practised, these remains may have been bodies of deceased fetish priests, kept above ground to enable their living colleagues to make good use of the various offerings placed round for the benefit of the dead. Food and drink is always provided in large quantities for deceased persons; in some cases a hollow bamboo being inserted in the mouth of the corpse, leads up to the surface, and at regular intervals particles of food and drink are put down. The fetish gods are also regaled with offerings of the best meat and drink, and the credulous niggers are delighted to find the god has accepted their gift, which of course has either been appropriated by the crafty priests, or the food devoured by ants and the drink evaporated in the sun.

Near each village is the medicine heap, consisting of a raised platform of bamboo or a hollowed tree stump, and piles of broken crockery, small bones, bits of metal and rag, placed indiscriminately together, and supposed to be a constant source of gratification to the fetish gods.

At this village I screwed up my courage to try a native dish that is often eaten on the coast. The dish consisted of an oleaginous stew made of the "achatina variegata," which, I may add for the benefit of readers unlearned in malacology, are immense land snails, often measuring nine or ten inches when crawling. No wonder then that gourmet curiosity and squeamishness had a struggle, but the former was victorious, and with a final effort, I started the attack. It tasted like clambake when particularly rank seaweed has been used in the preparation, and was just passable, though certainly not a dish one would choose again. In Cape Coast large quantities of these Titanic molluscs are collected and sold in the market. A brawny Jack Tar observed, as he turned away with evident disgust from some tempting piles of these helical dainties offered for sale at threepence each: "The cussed niggers are every bit as bad as them French Johnnies," a comparison that our across channel neighbours would think odious. I must admit, however, that the niggers' stew appealed to me far more than a most carefully prepared dish that I tasted in Boulogne, where the animals had been carefully reared and selected, at least so said the garçon.

Continuing with native dishes, the favourite food of many of the natives is kankee, a mixture of pounded corn and water, and "fou-fou" made of cassada plant, which the women laboriously beat out in a hollowed tree-stump with a heavy wooden pestle. The first time I tasted kankee was in a village near the coast, where some balls were prepared specially for me by the small, but not fair, hands of a real live, if dusky, young princess. I devoured a few of them with a good grace, but it was like eating sour dough, though I managed to surreptitiously sprinkle over them a tiny pinch of saccharine, a bottle of which is always carried in case of emergency.

This same stuff I afterwards tried boiled in a stew with a little bouilli-beef and plenty of the vegetable pepper, and in that case it resembled boiled damper, but the dish was so highly seasoned that relief had immediately to be sought by copious draughts of demulcent cocoanut milk.

Apropos of native dishes, the tale is told of a well-known Government official dining with a native chief. He managed to get through one dish, and was attacking another with avidity, when, from the bottom of the vessel, a delicious morsel was fished up, like a small human hand. The dinner was spoiled, and the unfortunate official was seized with a terrible organic working. Cannibalism at last, and he had partaken of it. When he had recovered sufficiently to move, he seized the negro by the shoulder and pointing to the ghastly fragment, gasped, "baby child, you scoundrel" and the inward groaning started again. A broad grin overspread the sable features of the chief. "Him no piccan you fool! Him iguana chop; dats him flipper." It was a stewed iguana.

Kola nuts are eaten by many of the natives habitually, and they are said to be very sustaining for a long march, and also to contain valuable medicinal qualities. The natives, especially the women, chew them like tobacco and expectorate as freely as any enlightened Boer.

The cable was run into Brafu Eadru during the afternoon, and taken over the Adansi hills the next day, while the Staff halted to allow the troops to close up before they crossed to Kwisa. Fortunately the cable is always looked on in reverential awe by these natives, and nothing is more wonderful, to their idea, than to hear the sounders at work. Its fame has spread, and no nigger would dare cut or injure what they call the "fetish cord." During the last war, the Ashantis, fearing to be overcome by the powers of this fetish string, fastened a long line of cotton on the opposite side of the road for a considerable distance, hoping thus to counteract the white man's fetish.

The carriers were all done up after the long march, and the leisure day following, was greatly appreciated by them; but the old adage about Satan and idle hands again proved true. Camped by the side of the stream were a large party of Winnebahs. A couple of Sierra Leone hammock-men went on a foraging expedition, and stole some plantains cooking on a fire. The owners retaliated, and there was a petty squabble, after which the Modenas of Sierra Leone raided the Winnebahs' camp. Though the latter were more numerous, the Modenas were the more resolute, and a splendid faction fight started. Sticks, clubs, stones, were speedily brought into play, and Donnybrook Fair was for once surpassed, though the niggers religiously followed the maxim of the "bold Irish boy," "If you see a head - hit it." Some familiar whacks were exchanged with a force that would have cracked the skull of any Irishman, and the niggers on both sides, with their blood thoroughly up, fought like demons. The sturdy Modenas forced the Winnebahs to retire, but every step was fiercely contested, and they again rallied on the bridge and attempted to hold it. Thrice the Modenas dashed up, and thrice they were repulsed, many of the

combatants being hurled from the bridge into the water which soon cooled their passion.

A few of the natives had machetes and slashed right and left, happily with little serious effect. Mr. Bennett Burleigh was the first white man on the spot, and armed with nothing more formidable than his white sunshade, he rushed in the midst of the combatants. It was almost ludicrous to see his broad form used as a shelter for many a hard pressed black, and showers of blows were dealt all round him, while he, I think, rather enjoyed the fun. Perhaps he thought of Trafalgar Square. One poor fugitive was cut off, and seeing the white man near, rushed to him for protection. He fell; and would soon have been dispatched by half a dozen men, who furiously started on him with heavy sticks, while one was about to make a clean cut on the fugitive's cranium with a machete, when bang came the gamp, and with much difficulty and beating did Mr. Burleigh induce the maddened crew to let the poor fellow alone. Hostilities soon started on the other side of the water near the village, and as things were becoming serious, a message was sent to the camp, and the officers, hastily arming themselves with sticks, appeared on the scene. Prince Henry arrived first, and going into the thick of the fray with shirt sleeves rolled up, emerged a minute after with a lanky Winnebah, whom he had brought out of the fight in a sorry state, covered with blood. Both sides were fairly worn out, and the small party of white men had little difficulty in separating the rival factions. Thanks to their thick negro skulls, no one was seriously hurt, and they were mostly suffering from nothing worse than bruised or cut heads and bloody noses.

In the evening the thousand carriers from Bekwai arrived, and were dispatched down country to bring up supplies. They seemed greatly relieved to get through our lines, but whether their anxiety was caused by the desire to get beyond the camp, or joy at having some one between them and the Ashantis, it is difficult to say.

On January 9th, the Staff restarted for Kwisa, which is situated on the other side of the Adansi Hills. The road from Braffu Eadru runs through a low and marshy district with dense bush, till it starts to wind in zig-zag fashion up the thickly wooded and steep sides of the Monsi Hill. The track was very narrow, rugged and difficult, and though I started early, and had reached the hill by sunrise, the exertion of climbing brought out the perspiration in streams. Upward still, clambering over rocks, clinging to projecting roots and hanging creeper, with tongue furred, throat parched, till, hot and panting, the summit was gained. The top of these hills is 2,000 feet above sea-level, and a delightful breeze blows across them and cools the overheated frame; but it comes as a deadly if welcome relief to those who linger to enjoy it.

I was disappointed, yet pleased, with the view from the summit. Through a break in the trees, a cloudless sky was visible, and stretching away below, a vast white rolling sea of mist had risen above the trees, but was not yet dispelled by the sun. I had expected a glorious view of the green sea of vegetation, but that white expanse of cloud-land almost compensated for the loss of the former. Descending on the other side, we were tantalized by the refreshing sound of running water, but the

bush was too impenetrable to reach the stream which flows in a hundred cascades down the rocky sides. On the hill, large masses of iron-stone abound, and gold in small quantities is collected in the beds of the neighbouring streams. We read in one report of the expedition, "Gold sparkles in the auriferous sand," also "Specks of gold dust glitter in the clay walls of the houses." If this were true, the place must be a perfect El Dorado; but, alas! 'tis not all gold that glitters," and these sparkling particles are nothing more precious than glistening pyrites.

Gold dust is, however, found in considerable quantities by the natives, who know where to seek for it, and it still forms the chief currency of the Protectorate, though English silver coinage is becoming more common on the Coast proper.

Kwisa is the most salubrious camp on the road, while its reputation is further enhanced by a stream of beautiful limpid spring water flowing from the solid rock. The sparkling liquid was very acceptable after the water we had previously found, often as thick and coloured as the soup at a sixpenny dinner, while so-called streams were more often mere mud puddles. Though Kwisa is undoubtedly a very healthy camp, several cases of fever occurred there. This is easily explained by the affected persons getting over-heated when crossing the hill, and afterwards taking a chill that at once brings on fever, and develops the malaria previously inhaled. Major Gordon was in charge of the camp, which was as beautifully clean and well laid out as his previous one at Prahsu.

Shortly after the Staff arrived, news was received from Prahsu announcing the death of Major Ferguson. Though he was as fine a specimen of manhood as ever donned uniform, malaria put its deadly grip on him, and he never rallied. His temperature rose to 110°, and recourse was made to the cold pack with a possible view of lowering the fever, but every effort was unavailing, and he died the previous evening. His funeral took place on January 10th. The service, conducted by Major Wolfe Murray, was a very impressive one, and was attended by all the garrison at Prahsu. The remains were laid to rest next to the grave of Captain Huysh. The poor fellow was only thirty-one, and his loss came as a shock to every member of the Expedition; for he was generally beloved by all who knew him, and many an officer and man will mourn his loss at home and abroad.

Captain Graham was down with fever, and Major Gordon left Kwisa and temporarily took over his command with the scouts. Captain Benson had a relapse, and had to be sent to the coast, which was very disappointing to an officer who had worked so hard in getting his batteries efficient, only to be denied the honour of taking them to the front.

The Artillery were at Kwisa, and, happily, Sir Francis had a second efficient Artillery officer with the Expedition in the person of Captain Blunt, who pushed forward and took over the command when Captain Benson was first taken ill.

Sickness was beginning to make many gaps in the ranks of both officers and men. There were, at this time, sixty cases on the sick list at the base alone, though only two deaths there, one of which was a private soldier in the hospital at Cape Coast, and the other, Sergeant-Major Stocker on the "Coromandel".



MAJOR FERGUSON.

*From a photograph by
Hospital Corporal-Major Saunders, Royal Horse Guards.*

On January 16th the Staff halted for a day; the Special Service Corps crossed the hills to Kwisa, and the West Yorkshire Regiment advanced to Braffu Eadru. Anxious to obtain a view from the summit of the hills, I again made the ascent at a later hour than on the previous day. This time I followed the course of the stream, which has its source among the rocks on the summit. The bed was so rocky that it was possible to follow the water right to the top by jumping and scrambling from boulder to boulder, with a little wading between. The bush closed right in to the edge of the water on both sides, the branches interlacing above, and forming a leafy avenue. Viewed from the top, this tunnel had a striking effect, as it was possible to see right down the whole length to the foot of the hill, the water flowing swiftly in smooth channels, then pouring in cascades over steep masses of rock, and glistening in places where the sun's rays penetrated the branches of the leafy canopy above.

The head of the spring proved to be some distance from the crest of the hill, and the tracts of the stream suddenly ended in a cul-de-sac of jungle. However, by dint of much struggling and laborious hacking with a jack knife, I struck the path close to the top. The noonday sun had dispelled every trace of mist, and through a break in the trees, as far as the eye could reach, there was a perfect flowing sea of leafage. Hills and hollows, ridges and lowland, all marked by waves of foliage; a vast expanse of heavy drifts of vegetation of every description. These hills form a crescent-shaped ridge, running from east to west, making a natural barrier for the

Ashanti country proper, and with such a splendid line of defence, and also considering the difficulties of transport, Ashanti could be rendered practically unassailable in this direction by a little judicious generalship, even with a small force.

Snakes are very plentiful, but did not intrude much into the camps. In bush cutting many were disturbed, especially in the vicinity of bamboo clumps. The cobra is found, but chiefly in the long jungle grass and corn patches to the north. The deadly puff adder is sometimes in evidence, likewise the more harmless, but more formidable, python. They are of little nuisance, and it would be quite possible to travel for weeks without coming across a single snake, though, if search were made, no difficulty would be experienced in securing good specimens. I had a few hunts, and found many harmless reptiles not worth skinning. At Mansu, however, I bagged a fair-sized python, and at Kwisa a brilliant green snake, about five feet long, curled from the thatch of the hut and dropped close to our feet. Having dispatched and skinned the gentleman, whose bite, I am told, is fatal, I put the carcase on the fire to boil to extract the vertebra. A carrier seeing this, spread the report that a white man was cooking snake for chop, and an eager crowd assembled to watch my culinary operations. I dished up the dainty morsel in a split bamboo, and great was their disappointment when, after cutting out the backbone, I threw the rest away, instead of making a meal of it as they had anticipated.

The ants on the Gold Coast are ever a source of wonder and fear. They have wasp-like waists but jaws of iron, and for callous brutality, voracious cunning, defiant audacity, and unrelenting malevolence, give me the African ant. You find him in impenetrable woods, many parts under water and no other animals to be seen. In the inner recesses of the forest he is instantly found; in beautiful glades, cultivated patches, even in a town, the pertinacious little brute is there; go where you will and he will follow you. White ants will attack a huge tree and reduce it to powder; they invade everything and everybody, and if they don't gnaw at your things for food, they will from sheer "cussedness."

I carefully treasured up a collection of various objects, but the ants got wind of it, and terrible havoc they made, devouring dried plants, entomological specimens, and a couple of small lemurs' skins into the bargain. If a swarm invaded a hut, little use was it disputing possession; you had to clear out bag and baggage, till they took their departure. The carnivorous little beast will crawl on you with unblushing effrontery, and coolly burrow his armoured head in your flesh as you are innocently watching him, and if you get in their toils, they are as painful, if not as poisonous, as any swarm of bees, and more difficult to get rid of, for each insect has to be hauled by main force from your body.

Their hills and houses are of various shapes and sizes, some making large mounds, while others are content with a smaller but far more elaborate dwelling, shaped like a three-storied Chinese Pagoda.

A more startling but innocent creature to be seen in the bush is the goliath beetle (*Goliathus Drurii*), which often grows to more than five inches in length, and he has an armour that requires considerable force to penetrate. The armoured little

ant-eaters are also often found hiding away in some hollow tree waiting for their prey. These edentulous little animals are easily tamed, and pretty little creatures they are too, despite their somewhat dragon-like appearance. Tiger cats, sloths, lemurs and monkeys abound in the West African forest. Leopards and jackals are common. A fair quantity of deer are found on the coast, while almost every animal that came from the Ark can be traced in the wide forest strip extending down the Guinea Coast.

At the foot of the hills there is a large track of sword grass about six feet high, with small clumps of trees dotted amongst it. These groves were loaded with bitter oranges, a juicy but tart fruit which makes a refreshing beverage, two being sufficient to make half a gallon of strong orangeade which can be sweetened to taste. These, and limes, might be well cultivated on the coast, and would pay, if shipped in sufficient quantities, as deck cargo, to England.

