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Source: *The British Medical Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 679 (Jan. 3, 1874), pp. 26-27

Published by: [BMJ](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25236233>

Accessed: 16/02/2015 16:16

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THE ASHANTEE WAR.

[FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.]

Gold Coast, December 4th.

FOR the first time in the history of this Protectorate, its affairs—military, political, and social—are being fully ventilated by means of the pens of the many correspondents who have cropped up during the war. You have now ordained that its affairs, medical and sanitary, are to remain no longer dormant, but be also unfolded to the general view *de die in diem*. Happily, the first scene in this drama of war is about to terminate, and with it those horrors which have shocked the sensibilities of humanitarians. Cutting off of heads, lopping off of arms, and such like interesting performances, can no longer be had recourse to within our territory, for the enemy are in full retreat to the Prah, and before this letter reaches England will have crossed the banks of that now rather celebrated river. For more than ten months these savages have been burning, enslaving, and destroying, until once gay villages have been turned into mere refuges for the many beautiful lizards which bask in the sun upon their now roofless walls. Everywhere where they have passed have they left their mark, and it will be years before the remembrance of the Ashantees will have passed away from the minds of the inhabitants. Now that we have an opportunity for doing so, it is most interesting to trace the progress of the Ashantee army from Prashu to Yaucomassie, where the first general action with the natives took place. The remains of the encampments are still to be seen, roofless shanties of palm midribs, neatly formed together, which, when covered with leaves, afforded shelter from the tropical rain and dews, so heavy in this country. These little bush dwellings line the path to the Prah every two or three miles, showing that their progress must have been most leisurely. For a savage nation, the Ashantees are adepts in the art of war. They march in companies and divisions, encamp and hut themselves, progress in easy stages, send out foragers or slaves for provisions, and are perfectly acquainted with the advantages of ambushes, shouting, tom-tomming, and such other means as act upon the rather sensitive nerves of their hereditary foes. Their ambushes are beautifully constructed of leaves and vines in the narrow paths; from behind these they have a ready means of retreat. Scouts occupy all the paths to their permanent encampments, so that it is quite impossible to steal upon them unawares, as often proved during the progress of the present expedition. The care these people take of their instruments of war, the construction of their houses, and many other points evident in their domestic history, show that, although savages in almost every sense of the word, they are still not without the pale of our admiration. That they are endowed with physical courage is undoubted, while the reverse of the picture may be drawn of the Fantees, who, while finely made men, are the most miserable cowards. Of the two races, the coast tribes are the larger and more muscular. As with other cognate races, they have evidently become enervated by more intimate contact with Europeans. The Ashantee army is made up of two distinct races—Ashantees proper, and Donkas or slaves; these last, without guns and perfectly naked, do all the menial work of the camp—erect shelter sheds, forage for plantains, and carry their masters' furniture and belongings. A number of these have been captured, nearly all in a starving condition, and some with every bone standing prominently forward; three small cuts upon each cheek denote their nationality. These Ashantee slaves appear to be very little above the animal in their ideas and feelings; food is devoured with avidity, and the unfortunate wretch who tries in the struggle to conceal a dainty morsel, when discovered, is belaboured most unmercifully. Appearing to have no animosity towards the white man, they all tell the same story of want of powder, food, disease, and death. It is an undoubted fact that small-pox, dysentery, bronchitis, and starvation have here been making sad ravages. This can be easily understood, for they have no idea of vaccination; and when one of their number is afflicted with variola, he is huddled in the bush and left to die, or allowed to roam about amongst them. The dearth of proper food, and consequent necessity of falling back upon unripe plantains, bananas, pine-apples, pawpaws, and the wild or bitter yam are, no doubt, the principal causes of the dysenteric attacks from which they suffer. Exposure to vicissitudes of temperature and wet, drinking of impure surface-water, largely impregnated with albuminous and decaying vegetable matter, must also contribute to the production of the disease. The odour and nature of the faecal accumulations which cover their camps sufficiently indicate the prevalence of this affection amongst them. Their sick and wounded they nearly always remove either upon men's backs, or in baskets roughly made from the midrib of the palm-leaves—a not very uncomfortable means of transport. All the chiefs and men of influence crossed the Prah with a number of slaves; many of these have died during the past eight

months. One prisoner related that his master crossed with twenty-four, and only two remained; another, on being asked why he deserted, replied, that, "as his master had died during the campaign, he was afraid to return to Coomassie, as his head would be taken off, in order to allow of his at once leaving for the world of spirits, to there resume his menial capacity and former servitude"—a condition of affairs to which he strongly and very naturally objected. These Ashantee gentlemen have not forgotten the attractions of female society in their wanderings. Amenquachie, the general-in-chief, is credited with no fewer than eight wives, who are carefully housed in camp in his own particular quadrangle. A chief's hut may be always known by this peculiar arrangement of the building; the shelter-huts are better made, and face each other in the form of a hollow square. Here the palavers are held; the voice of the solitary speaker, and the round of applause which follows upon his stirring words, have been frequently heard from our advanced posts, which are close upon those of the enemy. A few female slaves have been captured—all as wretched as the men. One in rather better condition surrendered herself not long since—a Crepi. When asked why she deserted her lord and master, she replied, "Well, I was taken as a slave from my own country to Coomassie a year and a half ago, *enceinte*, and there delivered of a baby-boy. Since then, no one has admired me, so I have left them upon the first opportunity." Her good-humoured face grinned from ear to ear. We all naturally laughed at such a pretty speech. It is to be hoped the fair dame has regained already her lost love. The Ashantees have some peculiar modes of burying their dead. Only free men are honoured with burial; the unfortunate slaves are left in the bush; higher chiefs are placed upon elevated biers, wrapped up in their clothes, and covered with leaves, there to remain until decomposition and ants clean the bones; these last are then collected on the return journey, and brought back to Coomassie. We have seen several of these in the forest, and the odour from them is anything but agreeable. An Ashantee warrior is, after all, a picture to look at; his clothes, a loin-cloth, over which are buckled the leather bandolier and bags containing his ammunition; a formidable knife stuck in this girdle, and a long flint musket, with a few amulets, complete the *tout ensemble* of his military furniture. Such is the savage soldier who has given us so much trouble, and spilled some of our best blood. Well-knit, lithe, active, he is perfectly capable of giving us plenty of trouble yet, and it is folly to suppose that our march to Coomassie will be a bloodless one. The wounded in the coming campaign will not be among the least of its difficulties after we have crossed the Prah. Such, then, are the Ashantees as we have seen them during the past few months. You can judge for yourself whether our enemies are to be despised.

I have thought it best to commence my letter with this brief account of the Ashantee army, as much of what I have written must be new to your readers.

By the latest accounts, the enemy were encamped near Faysoo, some twenty-four miles from the River Prah—slowly and leisurely retreating in three divisions. Their rear-guard was come up with on the 1st instant, attacked and driven upon the main body. In this attack, we lost one Houssa killed, and four men of the 2nd West India Regiment were wounded; some of the irregular troops were also "touched up." These last, it is whispered, were mindful of the old adage on this particular occasion—

"He who fights and runs away,
May live to fight another day."

Sir Garnet Wolseley, the Adjutant-General, Major Baker, Captain Lanyon, Aide-de-camp, and the principal medical officer left for the front on the 1st instant on a flying visit of inspection. Fifty blue jackets accompanied the General. Sixty miles of the road are now open, and it is being pushed on with vigour under the superintendence of Major Home, R.E. The insecurity of the road has hitherto been one of our great drawbacks; now, stores of all kinds are being pushed on to the first base of operations—Mansue—until the station on the Prah, or in its immediate vicinity, has been determined upon, so that one meets on the road nothing but a long line of carriers of ammunition, biscuit, preserved meat, rum, rice, tea, sugar, and other luxuries too numerous to mention. Now and then, a hospital-bath, or one of Fyffe's patent close stools, is observed in the distance—an indication that war has to be looked upon in quite another aspect, and that honour and glory are, after all, only the bright side of the picture.

According as the outposts are being advanced, temporary hospitals are established. That of the head-quarters of the 2nd West India Regiment is at present established at Mansue. These are evacuated of their sick as quickly as possible. Cape Coast has consequently become one large hospital. At Connor's Hill are located the Marines, of whom twenty-eight are on the sick-list, chiefly suffering from attacks of dysentery and fever, the latter disease predominating. The form is the usual Coast remittent or eight-day fever. I must defer

to a future letter a description of this disease. Here also an officers' hospital has been opened; and at Cape Coast is the garrison hospital, chiefly occupied by men of the 2nd West India Regiment, of whom some forty are under treatment. Quite recently, the church has been equipped for twenty-two patients, and is now available for its future sick population.

Twelve men of the Army Hospital Corps arrived by the mail of the 3rd instant, two of whom are compounders. One of the latter has been told off for duty at Connor's Hill; the other joins the headquarters of the 2nd West, at present in charge of Surgeon Thornton, at Mansue. The men of the Army Hospital Corps have hitherto behaved themselves very well. Sergeant Mahony, one of the earlier arrivals, Sergeant Edwards, Hospital-Sergeant 100th Regiment, and Sergeant Ronchier, have done very good work since their arrival. The men are endeavouring to do their best; and, in such a trying climate, they deserve every consideration.

Surgeon-Major Reade arrived by the mail of the 30th ult., and Mr. Waters by the succeeding one for Sierra Leone. Drs. M'Nalty, Ley, Horton, and Moore, are the other officers at head-quarters. The last officer has had a most severe attack of dysentery, which, in all probability, will necessitate a change to England. The disease was contracted at Bula, a camp now abandoned. Dr. Vore, Sanitary Officer, has returned from Acroftroom, and resumed his duty on the staff of the Quartermaster-General. Surgeon-Major Jackson has left in the *Simoom* for Ascension, for a change. We are consequently at present without a hospital ship, and anxiously looking out for the arrival of the *Victor Emmanuel*. A change of vessels will be of advantage, as, owing to the prolonged period of her stay here, the *Simoom* was becoming rather unhealthy. It should be remembered that hulks cannot with safety to their inmates remain anchored for any length of time in the waters of the Coast of Africa. Every one praises the *Simoom*, the courtesy of her medical officers, and the liberality of the treatment of the sick. Fresh provisions were instantly supplied, and everything conducive to the care and comfort of those labouring under the symptoms of disease.

The rains at Cape Coast are not yet finished. We had a regular downpour on the 1st. Up country, afternoon rains and thunderstorms still continue; these are accompanied by vivid lightning—indications that the African monsoon is drawing to its close. In the interval, the cool sea-breeze blows regularly, and the heat in the shade is not excessive. Up country, one scarcely feels the sea-breeze, although many of the stations are elevated some hundred feet above the level of the sea.

Lieutenant Grey, of the Royal Marines, was buried on the 1st instant with military honours; he died of dysentery the day previous. This is the third officer who has died since the arrival of Sir Garnet Wolseley—Eardley Wilmot, killed at Dunquah; Harry Mouat, of the Commissariat; and the last mentioned officer. Poor fellows! they lie side by side in the European cemetery near the Salt Pond. The town and its immediate vicinity are at present comparatively healthy. The executive officers of the Sanitary Commission have been working vigorously, and in time Cape Coast will present a very different appearance. The number of tumble-down houses is a great drawback, as they impede ventilation, and allow of accumulation of filth. At present, this must remain, unfortunately, as the legal rights of owners cannot be lightly interfered with. I must defer to a future letter many points of sanitary and medical interest.

ASSOCIATION INTELLIGENCE.

BATH AND BRISTOL BRANCH: ORDINARY MEETING.

The second ordinary meeting of this Branch was held at the Royal Hotel, Bristol, on Thursday, December 18th; E. L. Fox, M.D., President, in the Chair. There were sixty-four members present, and nine visitors.

New Members.—The following gentlemen were balloted for and elected members of the Association and of this Branch: Kirwan F. Sylvester, L.R.C.P. Edin., Trowbridge; T. Inman, M.D.; John Moir, L.R.C.P. Edin., Keynsham; J. W. Roeckel, M.R.C.S. Eng., United Hospital, Bath.

Communications.—I. Dr. SPENCER read a paper on the principle of action of different forms of Stethoscope, including a new form designed by himself.—Dr. Shingleton Smith made a few remarks.

2. Mr. STEELE showed a boy on whom he had performed Excision of the Elbow-Joint, demonstrating that the perfect power of flexion of the limb retained by the boy was due to the fact that the triceps was

divided longitudinally and turned to each side, instead of being cut across as has been usual in this operation.—Drs. Marshall and Inman, and Messrs. Dobson, Leonard, and Tibbits made remarks on this case.

3. Dr. J. G. DAVEY read part of a paper entitled *Jottings in Lunacy*. At the close of the meeting, Dr. Caddy asked several questions bearing on the subject; the answers to these will be given with the second part of the paper at the next meeting of the Branch.

BIRMINGHAM AND MIDLAND COUNTIES BRANCH: GENERAL MEETING.

The third general meeting for the session 1873-74 was held at the Midland Institute, Birmingham, on December 11th: present, FURNEAUX JORDAN, Esq., President, in the Chair, and fifty-five members and visitors.

New Members.—Five members of the Association were elected members of the Branch, and eight gentlemen were elected members of the Association.

The British Medical Benevolent Fund.—Mr. WATKIN WILLIAMS, with the permission of the President, called the attention of the meeting to the British Medical Benevolent Fund, and very strongly urged its claims.

Communications.—The following communications were made:

1. *Soft Cancer of the Kidney.*—Dr. RUSSELL presented a large tumour of soft cancer weighing between ten and eleven pounds, originating in the left kidney, and nearly destroying that organ, extending to the neighbouring glands, which constituted the main mass, and occasioning secondary deposits in the liver and on the pleura. The patient was below middle age. The history of the tumour did not extend beyond four months. The tumour increased with great rapidity, producing great oedema of the lower extremity and of the penis. Death occurred in three weeks, suddenly, from effusion in both pleurae, doubtless from partial compression of the abdominal vena cava. There was entire absence of cachexia, specially remarkable, considering the rapid growth of the tumour.

2. *Anencephalous Fetus.*—Dr. MALINS showed an anencephalous foetus, having also a deficiency in the posterior arches of the first three or four dorsal vertebrae. It occurred in the practice of Dr. Thompson of Kingswinford; its main interest being in the fact that it was the offspring of an idiot girl, an unmarried inmate of the workhouse.

3. *Ovarian Tumour.*—Mr. EBBAGE showed an ovarian tumour, removed after death from a maiden lady aged 85. The chief inconvenience caused during life was oedema of the extremities. The tumour filled the pelvis, and was firmly fixed by fibrous bands to the uterus. The tumour was in parts of bony hardness. It was referred for examination to the Pathological Section.

4. *Fibroma of the Uterus.*—Mr. BARTLETT exhibited a fibroma uteri removed the previous day by the *ecraseur*. Tinted microscopic specimens of the growth, kindly prepared by Dr. Malins, were placed on the table.

5. Mr. SAMPSON GAMGEE read notes on Esmarch's Bandages for Bloodless Operations; and Mr. BOND MOORE a paper on the Connection between Sewage-poisoning and Typhoid Fever. Each paper was followed by an interesting discussion.

BIRMINGHAM AND MIDLAND COUNTIES BRANCH: MICROSCOPICAL SECTION.

A MEETING of the Section took place in Queen's College, Birmingham, December 9th; Dr. WADE in the Chair.

The Optic Nerves and Chiasma.—Mr. PRIESTLEY SMITH read a paper on this subject, and referred to recent articles in the *Archiv für Ophthalmologie* which seemed to establish a total decussation of the optic tracts in the chiasma, and also the accepted belief in a semi-decussation. The settling of this great question would be of great importance in connection with hemiopia as a means of localising brain-lesion. The subvaginal space existing between the inner and outer sheaths of the optic nerve was described in its important relation to the conditions known as "choked disc" and staphyloma posticum. The paper was illustrated by diagrams explaining the different theories of the causation of hemiopia, and by a number of sections of the chiasma and trunk of the optic nerve, showing the normal structure and the changes produced by inflammation and atrophy.

Epiphytic Growths of the Skin.—Dr. CARTER contributed a paper on this subject, illustrated by specimens of tinea tonsurans, tinea circinata, and tinea sycosis, and gave some instructions also for obtaining