

making water, and arriving alongside in a sinking condition. Whilst regretting this loss of life, I cannot help mentioning the noble and devoted manner in which every individual performed his duty. Major Copland Crawford, though severely wounded, managed to fire two shots from his rifle at the enemy."

Captain Lawlor died of his wounds soon after.

It subsequently transpired that at the point where the "Alecto's" steam cutter was fired upon with such disastrous results, Nanna had put an advanced position in the form of a stockade about twenty yards from and parallel to the creek. The bush at this point is so thick that it is impossible to see anything and had Commander Heugh not heard the voices and got his pinnace turned in time, it is more than probable that not a soul of that boat's crew would have lived to tell the tale. The stockade was about 300 yards long and pierced for 50 guns although 23 only were mounted. These guns were muzzle loading smooth bores firing projectiles of 7 to 9 lb. weight.

This stockade was carried a few days later by a party of Hausas (Niger Coast Protectorate troops) and men from H. M. ships "Alecto" and "Phoebe." The plan of operations having been to land the troops at the place where the iron gates had stood and cut a road up to the stockade at some little distance from the creek thus taking the stockade in flank. As the bushes and trees were cut down they were laid crosswise in the mud in somewhat similar a manner to a Canadian corduroy road, thus giving a certain amount of bouyancy and foothold. Should, however, the luckless pedestrian miss the logs and put his foot in the liquid mud, it was ten to one that he would have to be dragged out by his comrades. Mangrove mud is not pleasant. It soaks through everything and smells horribly. It is said that our army in Flanders swore deeply. I do not think they could have had half the inducement to do so as had the members of the Benin expedition of 1894. But then, of course, sailors do not swear, it is only troopers who are allowed to give vent to their feelings in this manner. After capturing the stockade, the force pushed on towards the town but found it impossible to take it by this route, on account of the number of small creeks to cross and want of firm ground on which to place the guns. A retirement on the ships "Phoebe" and "Alecto" was deemed necessary. Owing to the difficulty of dragging the guns back the command was given to spike the 7 pr. Phoebe's gun and throw it into the creek. The 7 pr. gun, gun-carriage and Maxim gun carriage were thus disposed of and a retirement in excellent order covered by a rear guard of Phoebe's men was successfully carried out. The whole force being embarked by half past seven the same evening. As a result of this day's work, it was found that the force available was insufficient to cope with Nanna and dislodge him from a position, offering by natural obstacles and isolated situation so many difficulties to the besieger. Captain Powell, commanding H. M. S. "Phoebe" reported to the Commander-in-Chief as follows:

"There can be no question but that Nanna's position is a very strong one; his town is up a creek, or rather ditch, at least a mile long, which, as Lieutenant-Commander Heugh experienced, is obstructed and defended by ordnance of at least 7-pounder calibre commanding the waterway. The ditch itself only holds enough water to float one of our boats manned and armed for about two hours before and after high water, and is so narrow that a steamboat could not turn round nor a pulling boat use oars."

More ships were telegraphed for and

on the 18th of September the Commander-in-Chief of the West African squadron (Rear-Admiral F. G. D. Bedford, C. B.,) arrived in H. M. S. "Philomel" and assumed the conduct of affairs. The total force at his disposal consisted of about one hundred Hausa troops (Niger Coast Protectorate force) and the men of the "Philomel", "Phoebe", "Alecto" and "Widgeon." The British sailor is a wonderfully clever fellow and invariably rises to the occasion. To get the direction of the town from the anchorage in the Benin River was most important. The Phoebe's rigged up a spar in prolongation of their fore top mast placed a man with a compass and spy-glass in a "crow's nest" and thus we, being enabled to see the roofs of the houses in Brohemie over the tops of the Mangrove trees, gave the compass bearing to those on deck and by means of instruments the guns were laid on the town of Brohemie. Shelling by the ships guns was carried on for several days and did considerable execution. It was reported by deserters from Nanna's people that the fire was so accurate that the shells were dropping into the town and "making huge ponds." We afterwards saw the truth of this, a shell falling into the soft earth and exploding on impact would make a large excavation which filled with water when it rained. The natives description about the ponds was a very good one. There were many incidents connected with the shelling, one of which happened to a party of cardplayers assembled in a Chief's house in Brohemie. During the game a shell came through the roof and bursting is reported to have killed 13 of the enemy. Traces of this incident afterwards proved that the story was not a "fairytale." In conducting operations of war in West Africa, one of the greatest difficulties is to obtain accurate information. The native by nature is given to exaggeration and mendacity. This shelling had a great effect on Nanna. It must be remembered that the ships were anchored about 3,000 yards from the town and invisible owing to the bushes. It was past his comprehension how explosives could be lopped down on his head from such a distance and from vessels out of sight. In order to stimulate his people to fight, the savage mind had recourse to unpardonable atrocities. When a black man is drowned and soaked for sometime in salt water he turns a sickly yellowish white. He treated six slaves captured from Sobos in this manner, cut off their heads placed them on long spears and had them carried round the town, saying, "See the heads of the white men that I have killed in the fight." Our horror can be imagined when we came upon the headless bodies, swollen to an abnormally disgusting size, floating down the creek and rendering the already unhealthy air more putrid and deadly. The enemy being so demoralized owing to the shelling, it was determined to attack and rush the town. On the 23rd of September having organized a party of woodcutters, these were brought up in boats and landed at the stockade which was now in our possession and defended from re-capture by a party of the Philomel's Blue Jackets who had erected a gun epaulement at the end nearest the town. The plan of operations was to cut a road striking into the Mangrove Swamp from the back of the stockade and bending gradually to the North so as to come out on the East side of the town and on the hard ground which was reported to be there. Each woodcutter was provided with a machete, a description of cutlass useful both as a means of defence and also an article for cutting

bush and under-growth. To protect the woodcutters a party of Housas was sent about 100 yards in advance and extended as skirmishers.

On Sunday morning the work began and was continued for some hours until the enemy becoming aware that we were in the vicinity opened a heavy fire from his battery with smooth bores, rifles and a machine gun. The projectiles flew about merrily for sometime, but fortunately the shooting was wild as he could not determine our exact position. It was deemed advisable, however, to withdraw for the day so as not to excite suspicion as to our movements. The skirmishers had strict orders not to fire unless attacked and to conceal our movements as much as possible. The next day, Monday, was a repetition of the tactics. From information furnished by the scouting party, it was found that only about half an hour's cutting work remained to be done to enable us to debouch into the open and make the final attack.

At 5:30 a.m., on the morning of the 25th of September, the force told off for the attack by the road through the swamp, was landed. This force consisted of Hausas, and Blue Jackets and Marines from the four Men-of-War, in all about 300 men. A party of the Philomel's men under Captain Campbell, R. N. was left to hold the stockade while the remainder of the force marched up the road. Admiral Bedford describes the march as follows, in his official dispatch to the Admiralty:

"The march along the track was a most arduous and fatiguing one, especially for men equipped. When freshly cut down the thin layer of trees and roots gave some kind of footing, but even with this help you sank at every step half-way to the knee. On this occasion, however, most of the road had been cut for two days; it had been trampled down by the passage to and fro of large numbers of men. Rain had fallen heavily at short intervals, and to go down over the knees in the evil smelling mud was a constant occurrence; but the men trudged on quietly and persistently and not being hampered by any field guns, made fairly good progress."

On reaching the open (the remainder of the cutting having been completed and the woodcutters fallen back) we were well rewarded for the trouble of cutting the road by finding ourselves on the flank and in such a position as to enfilade the enemy's battery, which defended the entrance to the town from the creek. The Hausas, who had acted as skirmishers up to this point, soon captured these defences and spiked the guns. (The guns were afterwards destroyed by a charge of gun cotton.) The formation then altered itself so as to place the Marines in front with the Rocket party and Maxim Gun. Upon taking up our position on the hard ground and gaining a clear view it was soon evident that the enemy's position was untenable. We were in rear of his principal defences and so placed that our fire on the town would make things too warm for him.

Firing was opened on us from a house in the Northern part of Brohemie which was placed in a state of defence for the purpose. The enemy were soon dislodged from this however by heavy volleys from the Marines and a hail of lead "pumped" on them from our Maxim guns, together with rockets discharged into the town from the Rocket party. The West African has a horror of war rockets. He cannot understand how the hideous hissing machine flies through the air, shrieking as it goes. It falls to the ground, only to get up again and play havoc with anything it encounters in scuttling about the place, and then as a finale, bursts. The enemy could now be seen leaving their guns and running into the bush at the back of the