

which was in 1610. They built a fort, from which they were dislodged by the Dutch, and the latter were similarly treated by the English in 1661.

Kumassi, the capital of Ashanti, was first visited by Europeans on the 15th of May, 1817. Mr. James, commandant of Accra Fort, accompanied by a staff, visited that place partly to establish a British residency or consulate. In passing through the intermediate country they were much struck with the desolation the Ashantis had everywhere left behind them in their many engagements with neighboring tribes. No cultivation was to be seen, villages were ruined and deserted, and long tracts of country crossed without meeting a single human being. The visitors upon their entry into Kumassi were honored with a public reception, attended by a display of barbaric pomp and wealth, to impress them with the greatness of the king. At the entrance of the town they were met by some 5,000 warriors, who kept up an incessant discharge of musketry and led them slowly through the crowded streets to the market place, to the king, who was waiting in state, surrounded by chiefs and officers of his court. The ambassadors were astonished at the wealth exhibited and the display of gold. It was estimated there were 30,000 soldiers present. A number of differences which existed were settled, and a treaty of peace was concluded on the 7th of September, 1817. Among the clauses was one that there should be perpetual peace between the British subjects in that country and the subjects of the king of Ashanti, and another that a British officer should reside constantly at the capital for the purpose of instituting and preserving a regular communication with the governor at Cape Coast Castle.

From 1819 to 1821 the king of Ashanti endeavored to complicate his relations with the English by means of unreasonable demands and the imposition of fines for fancied breaches of the treaty. Matters became very much strained, and culminated in an engagement brought about by the barbarous murder of a sergeant of the Royal African Company. The English resolved to punish this act of barbarity, and marched to the scene of the crime, where they found the Ashantis assembled in arms, and who fired upon them, but retired after an engagement.

As a result, trade at once ceased with Ashanti. Cape Coast Castle was consequently isolated, and to ensure against attack the people built a loopholed wall of mud from the sea-beach on the east of the town to cross the hills in a semicircle to the sea-beach on the west, and the Government erected a tower (afterwards called Fort Vic-

tor), armed with guns landed from H.M.S. Tartar.

At this stage the Home Government decided to assume the control of the settlements on the Gold Coast. The reason assigned for such a step was that the local authorities connived at the maintenance of the slave trade, and the annual grant received from Parliament had been used with the intention of keeping others from participating in legitimate trade. In the Parliament of 1821 a bill was passed abolishing the African Company of Merchants and transferring to the Crown all the company's forts and possessions on the Gold Coast, which were to be placed under the Government of Sierra Leone. At this period there were eight forts; the white establishment consisted of 45 persons, and the number of black and colored people in the company's pay, some 450.

The Government of the Gold Coast was assumed by Sir Charles McCarthy on the 28th March, 1822. He endeavored to re-open friendly relations with Kumassi, and despatched messengers to the king, announcing his assumption of office and bearing the customary presents. He provided for the defence of the forts by the formation of native troops in the service of the late company into colonial corps, composed of 3 companies, known as the Royal African Colonial Corps of Light Infantry.

In the early part of December, 1822, a company of the 2nd West India Regiment arrived at Cape Coast, and on the eve of the outbreak of hostilities, the force on the Gold Coast consisted of one company of the 2nd West India Regiment and 5 companies (2 white and 3 black) of the Royal African Colonial Corps, in all less than 500 men. In June, 1823, the long threatened invasion took place, some 3,000 Ashantis crossing the Prah and Prashu on the 4th of that month. This force was met by the whole of the troops from Cape Coast, who compelled them to retire, and a second attempt on their part met with no better success.

A disastrous expedition was made into the Wassaw country. The force sent out was crushed by overwhelming numbers, and the failure of ammunition at a critical moment turned the defeat into disaster. The Ashantis, however, made no attempt to follow up their success. During the year 1824 a number of engagements took place between the English and the Ashantis, until the latter withdrew to their territory.

The mortality among the officers and European troops during this campaign had been terrible. Out of the two first companies of white soldiers who arrived at the

Gold Coast in April, 1823, only one man remained alive in December, 1824. Out of a second detachment that arrived in November, 1823, only eight remained alive. The greater part of a third detachment which arrived on the 12th of March, 1824, died within three months of landing. The deaths of 15 officers took place within the same period—April to December.

In 1826 the Ashanti army made a second advance and were repulsed after a severe

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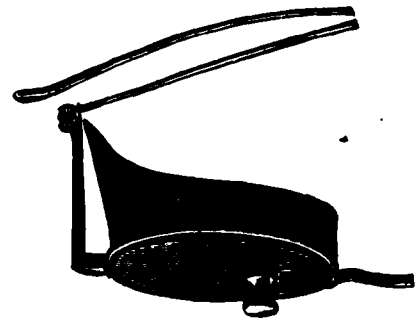
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