

in Ashantee. It would be of great advantage if as many Englishmen as possible would be good enough to follow me, because ignorance as to its nature leads to very mischievous criticism of our generals in the field, and when the successful result of a wise policy is announced, the previous criticism is forgotten in the excitement of triumph, which the many then attribute to luck or sudden inspiration amending previous dilatoriness. Hardly any one realises that the criticism is proved to have been fatuous. As I have been trying for years to get this matter understood, I should hardly insist on it now had I not lately found that among a body of very intelligent officers with whom I was talking, not one had a glimmer of the truth.

The fact that an army "moves upon its belly" is generally known, though it is not understood. Translated into hard fact it means that a general can only move forward successfully with his army when he is assured that he will be able to supply it during its movement with ammunition and food for man and beast. These must be not at his Chemulpho, the point on the coast or elsewhere where he can easily get as much as he wants, but close to the very point where he intends to fight. Now in civilised countries like France and Germany, not only do great supplies of food exist, but they are concentrated in so many centres at towns, villages, etc., that cavalry moving ahead of the army can, as they did in the war of 1870, have provisions collected in advance, which will be ready on the arrival of the several parts of the army. Furthermore, railways can from the rear bring up ample supplies of ammunition. But in the case of a move across a desert, as the extreme case, or through an ill-cultivated, uncivilised country like the Korea in a secondary degree, this action is impossible. Something must be done to take its place. Large means of transporting food and ammunition must of course be provided, but that is not enough. Suppose there be with a force of 10,000 men transport sufficient to carry forward all its wants for six days, that represents an enormous amount of transport which it will take a very long time to land from ship-board. But yet if the 10,000 men have to move forward 150 miles, the distance from Soul to Ping-Yang, it will not be enough to enable the army to be fed near Ping-Yang. For probably in such country the transport animals will not be able to traverse that distance under at best eight or nine days, and after they have delivered up their food they will have to go back to Chemulpho, another eight or nine days, to put the whole case moderately, and to return again before they can deliver another pound of food to the troops. Therefore, movement under those conditions would be starvation.

If, however, instead of doing this the general sends to the front only a small portion of his force sufficient when well protected to cover the

movement of his transport and the accumulation of his supplies, the whole case is changed. The greater part of his force is fed easily at Chemulpho, easier the nearer he is to it. It will require little or no transport whilst there. The great bulk of the transport can be employed in accumulating stores in his front just as the Cavalry would have done for him by requisition in a civilized country. Of course it becomes for him a very nice calculation to ascertain how few men he can afford to leave in charge of his supplies. If he puts too few there the enemy may pour down upon the very accumulation he is making. But he can well afford to let the enemy achieve "great victories" of the kind we have heard of, to have "wounded men brought back into Soul," to have these "victories confirmed by Korean report," as we heard that they were, so long as this means that his outlying posts have been driven in, so long as the enemy does not succeed in reaching his depots of supply. What at all events is certain is that the fewer men he can afford to keep at the front, the more he can keep back as near as possible to Chemulpho, the quicker will be his accumulation of supplies, and therefore the more rapid and effective will be his movement when it does take place.

I have no doubt at all that that is the history of the chief work during the last month in the Korea on the Japanese side, so far as the column from Chemulpho is concerned. In different degree the same thing is true of the columns from Gensan and from Hwang-Ju, though the distance from Hwang-Ju being so much shorter, the movement would, so far as supply is concerned, be much easier and may have mainly depended on boats up the Tatong river. It would require much greater caution to advance on this side till the last moment because of the proximity of the enemy. On the Gensan side, concealed as the movement would be by the mountains, the chief difficulty and delay must have occurred in gathering force on the western side of the mountains, as the troops emerged from the meagre bridle paths.

To return now to the report of September 3rd. On the same day that we had some 20,000 or 22,000 Chinese accounted for from Chinese sources as in the neighbourhood of Ping-Yang, we were informed from Nagasaki by independent report that 74,000 Japanese in all had landed in the Korea. Some fraction of these has undoubtedly been employed in the neighbourhood of Fusan. I still incline to the belief that the Japanese there have been engaged in improving the communications between Soul and Fusan with a view to the winter when Fusan will be open and Chemulpho closed. Probably the disturbances have been caused by natives attempting to interrupt the working parties. Large deductions must be made from the fighting columns for supply, the guardianship of the three ports and the lines from them to the army. I should

be inclined to put for various reasons the three columns at a good deal less than 20,000 men each; because it is usually safe to expect in war that the numbers available will be much less than any apparently strict calculation would make them. Still victors do not usually care to exaggerate their own numbers, and, as the Japanese say they were three to one at Ping-Yang, it is obvious that nearly 60,000 men, in all, out of the 74,000 embarked from Japan may have been available. I incline to accept the Japanese statement as to the numbers captured, because an army surprised at night and surrounded on all sides would not be likely to escape in large numbers. The fourth which the Japanese say managed to get through is quite as large a number as I should have expected. Seeing that the Chinese themselves claimed to have 20,000 at Ping-Yang, I think everything confirms the Japanese estimate, nor do I see why they should in such an attack have suffered more than they say that they did. Panic-stricken men are not good shots at night and do not usually in any form make much resistance.

On the other hand it is of course quite conceivable, considering the meagre nature of our information at present and the uncertainty of the sources from which it is derived, that the whole operation may have been greatly exaggerated. The curious coincidence between the numbers reported on the Chinese side, too long ago to have any connection with the present statements, and the numbers said by the Japanese to have been dealt with when they attacked Ping-Yang, looks at least like corroborative evidence of their truth. We know nothing of what Chinese forces may be gathering in Southern Manchuria and on the Yalu. Their movements are sure to have been slow, and the difficulty for them of collecting transport and supplies must be even greater than that of collecting men. Still it is hardly possible, after all we have heard from those who have known the Chinese army, that a force of 20,000 men, if it was so many and it may have been such less, can represent more than a body which they pushed on in advance, very unwisely no doubt, on the principles I have indicated. Its hopeless defeat must pave the way for the advance of the victorious Japanese general upon the Yalu river, but I hardly fancy that he will be able to move far into Manchuria without a fight with some considerably larger force.

It is clear from the latest reports that we have received, that the portion of the Japanese fleet engaged in the attack on the Chinese at the Yalu mouth, was not so large as the Chinese asserted, but nine cruisers, and two fast converted transports, engaged twelve war-ships, and four torpedo-boats employed in escorting six transports. As the Japanese claim, six smaller fighting ships were also with the Chinese. I cannot see how there can be any doubt that the engagement is for all practical purposes an enormous gain to the Japanese